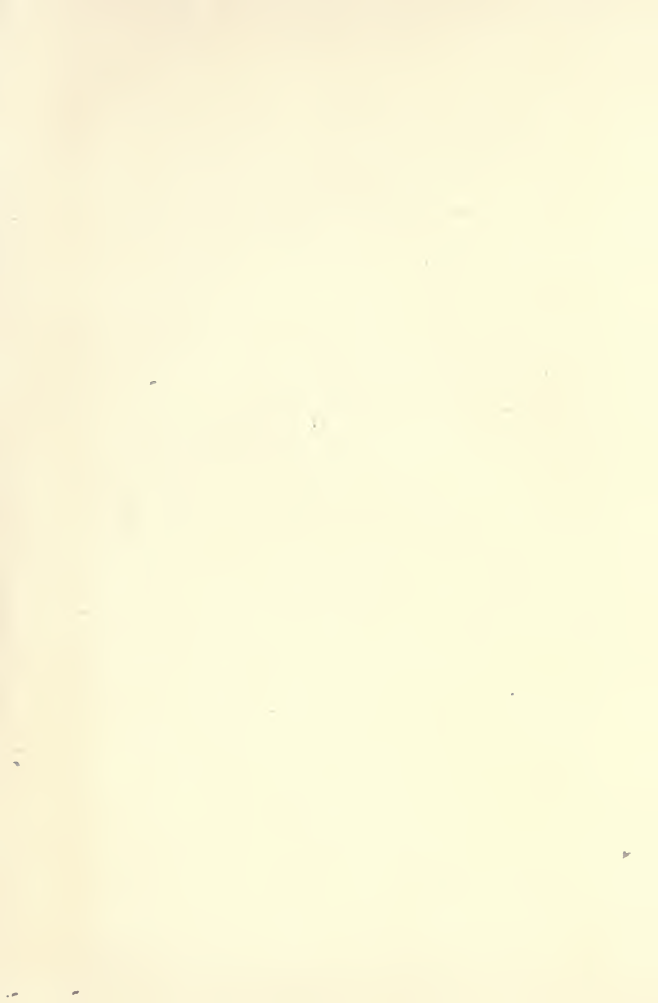


TRAILS TO WOODS AND WATERS

CLARENCE HAWKES

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NOSTRILS DISTENDED, EYES BLAZING, HIS WHOLE
ATTITUDE BELLIGERENT *See page 146*

Trails to Woods and Waters

By

CLARENCE HAWKES

*Author of "Shaggycoat," "Black Bruin,"
"King of the Thundering Herd," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES COPELAND



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*Dedicated to the Boy Scouts and the
Campfire Girls of America by one
who sympathizes with them in all
their outdoors sports and recreations*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Some of the material published in this book has appeared in two of Mr. Hawkes' earlier works which are now out of print.

THE BOOKS OF CLARENCE HAWKES

It is with a feeling of awe and wonder that I take up each new book from the pen of Clarence Hawkes. Here is the born nature-lover, the woodsman, the chronicler and the painter of mental pictures who for a few brief years looked into the pulsing heart of Nature, focused his mental camera upon her during a few brilliant days, and then suddenly, with a stroke like lightning, all the world became dark.

The work of Clarence Hawkes marks the triumph of an indomitable human Soul over darkness and despair. With marvellous fidelity he paints what he has seen and yet remembers, and for the rest he gathers his share of wild animal lore,—just as we all do,—from the hunter, the trapper, the bird-man and the brother naturalist. The naturalist or nature lover who writes only what he

6 The Books of Clarence Hawkes

himself has seen never goes far; and soon he begins to travel in circles. From the great Audubon downward the wise nature writer judiciously supplements his own observations with the testimony of others, thus to make the story complete.

Therefore fear not to accept the stories of Clarence Hawkes as being true to life; for he works "even as you and I." The mental pictures of youth often grow sharper with age. His stories ring true to life. I read them to my grandchildren with confidence, while they listen with rapt attention. The wild-animal hero tale has its legitimate place in literature. When the impossible is carefully eliminated, and the details are true to life, what more does any one desire?

Therefore, take my friends "Shovelhorns" the moose, "Shaggycoat" the beaver, and "Black Bruin," and make much of them; for they are worth it.

And if your ego becomes too colossal, if you are tempted to rail at Fate, and denounce your Luck, take "Hitting the Dark Trail" and

sit down all alone to read it. As the story unfolds, you will—like me—begin to realize how much you enjoy in seeing nature day by day, how much you have to be thankful for, and then how wicked you are when you upbraid the Fate that denies you the last ten per cent of life. Finally, you will look into your own soul, solemnly ask yourself: “ Could I be as brave as he is, were I in his place? ” and with chastened spirit you will rise up silently vowing to be a better man.

WILLIAM T. HORNADAY.

*Director New York
Zoölogical Park.*



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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

PRINTED BY J. BARNARD

AT THE SIGN OF THE SUN

IN THE STRAND

1724

AND SOLD BY

W. BARNARD

AT THE SIGN OF THE SUN

IN THE STRAND

1724

AND SOLD BY

W. BARNARD

AT THE SIGN OF THE SUN

IN THE STRAND

1724

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INTRODUCTORY
THE TRAIL TO WOODS AND
WATERS

INTRODUCTORY.

The Trail to Woods and Waters

THE trail to woods and waters was a double one that I followed with eager feet in summer or in winter.

The first branch of this winding trail started just under an old pair of bars, where we let the cows through from a crooked lane into the barnyard.

Each morning I let down these bars, and started the cows for pasture and each night I put them up again when the cows were driven home.

The trail wound about many a grassy hillock or mossy hollow and around many a jagged stone through the lane to the pasture, for it was a cows' path, and all cow paths are crooked. Many a sharp stone lurked in ambush for bare feet.

What boy of you who reads these pages ever warmed his cold feet on a frosty morning in the flattened down grass where the old cow had slept the night before, keeping the earth warm and inviting for blue, aching toes?

All the way of its many turns and twists, this trail to the woods was fringed with weeds and grasses, with flowers and bushes, many of which were hung with delicious fruit.

Just at the point where the lane led into the pasture, a golden sweet apple tree stood. Here I always stopped, not only to refresh myself with a half dozen apples, but also to shy apples at the red squirrels that were always scolding and frisking about in the tree.

Further out in the pasture the trail led under a leaning apple tree. The tree was so much inclined that I called it the leaning tower. I could stand perfectly erect and walk up the trunk of the tree without taking hold with my hands—the only tree on the farm that admitted of such a stunt. Here,

perched upon the trunk of this friendly tree, about twenty feet from the ground, I would sit for five minutes, looking off across the country to see if anything out of the ordinary was doing. Perhaps in the mowing, beyond the pasture I would spy a woodchuck sitting erect, looking for all the world like a small black stump, or maybe I would discover a hawk sailing high up in the heavens. If so, I would watch the big bird and try to discover what he was hunting.

Further on, the trail led by great clumps of raspberries and blackberries. At these spots, I always stopped for refreshments. Only those who have tasted the wild fruit directly from the vine or bush, know its delicious flavor.

Still further on the trail led into a maple grove and this was the beginning of the sweet green woods. In this maple grove I loved to linger, for it was the sugar bush.

It did not take much imagination to see the trees each with a painted bucket dangling upon its side, or to hear the musical

drip, drip, drip, of the sap into the pails. This was what I called "The Song of the Sap." To make the picture complete however, I had to imagine white clouds of smoke and steam pouring from the sugar house, and this was difficult on a hot summer's day.

The sugar orchard was the home of the gray squirrels, and it was a delight to sit perfectly still upon an old log and see if one could discover a squirrel dropping down maple seeds, and if so to spy out the gray fellow high up in the treetop balancing himself nicely upon a small limb, getting his breakfast.

In hot weather it was so cool and sweet in the slumbrous aisles of the maple grove that there was always a temptation to linger, while the silver-footed moments of summertime sped by.

The trail to the waters was out in the meadow in front of the old farmhouse in which I lived. But the trail did not start there.

One day I took my lunch and followed the

little stream for a mile up through the meadows to its source, just to see where the trail really did begin.

I tramped by many a swaying clump of willows, or green cattails. The sweet flag I always marked down in my mind, for I would come some other day and dig the root which, when it was cured with sugar and spice, was fit for a king.

Many a time I was fooled, thinking I had found the beginning of the trail, but when I would poke away the grass I would find that the tiny stream went still further back for its source. At last I found it however, high up in a hillside. It was a small basin perhaps a foot across, fringed with ferns and water grasses and in its middle the water pure, cool and sweet, bubbled up in a tiny living fountain. Up from the cool sweet earth it gushed, a thing of wonder and beauty.

It was evening when I returned home and I was late in driving home the cows, but I felt well repaid for the long tramp, for I had found the secret of the little stream. I had

followed the trail to the waters from its very beginning.

The course of the trail from that point was well known to me.

The source alone had been its mystery.

I knew all its deep holes and the rapids, where the speckled trout loved to lie, and the pebbly shallows where the minnows darted, and the deep hole where the lazy suckers stood with head up-stream sucking in their dinner.

I knew the bank where the noisy kingfisher had his nest, and his favorite stump from which he loved to fish.

The broad pool where the heron speared fish, and the tall grasses that hid the muskrat's house.

All the little waterfalls, including the one that turned the small water wheel, I knew.

I knew the brook in spring when it ran riot, in summer when it had dwindled to a tiny thread, in the autumn, when the life along its banks was nipped by the first frost,

and in the winter when Jack Frost had sealed up all the pools for their winter sleep.

I had followed this trail to the waters often, down to the broad deep mill pond, where once I thought it ended.

The mill pond was, to this trail to the waters, what the forest was to the trail to the woods—its consummation, and end. The point at which it ceased to be, and became something larger and better.



CHAPTER I
A TALE FROM THE SKIDWAY



CHAPTER I

A Tale from the Skidway

A BARE-FOOTED, tanned-faced boy, dressed in brown denim overalls and a jumper, sat astride a mammoth pine log in the mill yard, carving his initials in bold letters in the soft bark of the pine. He whistled and smiled as he carved and seemed well content with his occupation and surroundings.

It was always a pleasure for the boy to be about the mill. The hurrying belts, the mad gearing and the screaming circular saw were all wonderful. There was a certain poetry and rhythm in this mad rushing machinery that fascinated, even while it terrified. The boy never could quite understand how the water which slipped so easily into the end of the flume, only laving his hand slightly as he held it in the current, could be turned into such mad careering force.

When one tired of the hum of wheels and the pounding of belting and the hideous shrieking of the great circular saw, there was always the mill yard to flee to. There the sounds from the mill were all subdued and the placid mill pond, and a fringe of green hills beyond offset the turbulence of the mill.

The initials were finally completed and the boy drove his knife deep into the log and viewed his carving critically.

It did not just suit him, the bark should come off, to make a panel, and then the initials should be carved in the wood instead of the bark, this would be much more artistic, so he gashed the bark savagely, making a rather unsymmetrical square about the initials.

"I wish you would stop," said a deep mellow voice from the heart of the log. "I don't want to be scarred and hacked when I take my turn on the carriage before the saw. I want to be as nearly perfect as I can, now I am cut in pieces."

The boy pulled the knife from the bark

quickly, shut it with a snap and put it into his pocket.

He had often heard the trees and wild-flowers talk in the deep woods, but never a log, and he wished to know more of the monster pine on which he was sitting.

"I did not know you cared," he said sympathetically. "I thought you were only a log, and would soon be sawed into boards, so a few extra cuts would not make any difference."

"Only a butt-log," sighed the old pine, and its voice had a touch of melancholy, like the sighing of wind in pine needles. "Only a butt-log! That is what most people think, but I am more than that. I am a personality. A memory beside which all the other memories in the countryside pale and are as nothing, unless I make an exception of the memories of the mountains and the cliffs, near which I stood; of course they are older and wiser than I. But I am still a noble memory and a personality as mysterious and rich as the odor of my needles on a fresh summer

breeze, when the sun has warmed my thought and stirred me to speak of other days. The things that I have seen would fill a large book, and the memories would all be sweet and wholesome."

"I do not see how you could have seen very much," said the boy skeptically. "You have always been the sentinel pine, standing on the brow of the mountain. My grandfather says you stood there just as you did last year when he was a small boy. You could not stir from the spot. How could you have seen much?"

"I was patient and observing and the world came to me," replied the pine thoughtfully. "I will tell you my story and then you will see.

"About two hundred and fifty years ago, or thirty or forty years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, a tiny white pine seed parted company with the cone that bore it and floated leisurely down through the balmy spring atmosphere. It had been two years in forming and was glad to escape from its

parent tree and venture into the world on its own account.

“Just at the particular moment that the seed freed itself from the cone, there came a slight puff of wind, that influenced the after-life of the seed greatly, for it wafted it forty or fifty feet into the forest, and deposited it in a dark gloomy hollow.

“This tiny seed was a very insignificant looking thing, seemingly of no more worth than a grain of sand. But here appearances were most deceitful, for the seed held a secret more precious than all else in the world, the secret of life, which with all his inquisitiveness and his genius for finding out things, man has never been able to discover. If that seed could have told the world what it knew that spring morning, the scientist would have hugged himself with delight.

“But the little seed was very modest and unconscious of its importance. It lay there in the mold where the playful spring zephyr had dropped it, and dreamed while the summer days went by.

“Sometimes when the day was warmer than usual, and the heat penetrated to the deep gloom of the dense forest, the seed felt a longing or a desire, for something, it knew not what. Then it seemed to the seed that something was calling to it from above, but the feeling soon passed and the seed kept on dreaming.

“At other times the seed was conscious of power within itself, a force that made it restless, a memory that was calling, a desire that was stirring, a hope that had not yet been fulfilled. Finally one warm summer morning the seed thought it felt something tugging at its very inner self. Then it awoke, and pushed up through the mold.

“It was much brighter and more cheerful above the mold and the seed was glad that it had obeyed the call, but who it was that called it, the seed did not at first know. Finally, down through the treetops there fell a warm pencil of light, vibrant and delicious.

“It touched the tiny, pale sprouting seedling with its warmth and then the seedling

knew that it was its foster father, the sun, who had been calling all through the summer hours. Henceforth, its mother, the earth, and its foster father, the sun, would nourish and sustain it in sunshine and storm, in heat and cold.

“Two years went by and there was only a tiny tuft of green to show for the seven hundred odd days. For, living as it did in the deep forest, under the skirts of large trees, fifteen minutes of sunlight a day was all the little seedling got, and one cannot grow very fast on such short rations. It would have liked to walk out into the sunlight and warmth, but God had placed it in the gloom, so it stayed there and lived its life the best it could.

“On the little pine’s fifth birthday, one could have covered it with a tumbler, so slowly it grew.

“When it was ten years old a four quart pail would have screened it from the world, while on its twenty-first birthday, when it was of age, a bushel basket would have cov-

ered it. A white pine in the open would have been much larger at this age, but this pine was a victim of circumstances, during its sapling years.

“After this I grew much faster than I had done before, for the tip of my blue green plumes now reached a pencil of light for which I had been long stretching.

“So instead of a scant fifteen minutes of sunlight a day, I now had an hour of my foster father’s gracious smile.

“How it warmed and cheered me! Before, I had been gloomy and foreboding, but now I became hopeful and cheerful, and full of great longings. Before, it had seemed to me that I would never get out of the darkness and the damp mold. Now, I was sure that some day I would be almost as tall as the great monarch pine from which I had sprung.

“The first two decades of my life had been spent almost entirely in the bosom of my mother, the earth. Now I belonged partly to the earth, and partly to the sun. I could

not but obey the new impulse within me to stretch up and out. I had been sleeping, had been a dullard and a stupid, and must make up for lost time.

“From being almost afraid of my foster father, the sun, I began to love him, and to look for his coming, as a child for its parent. I was lonely when he was hidden from me; true, he always sent his hand-maiden, the moon, to cheer us through the night, but her smile was not so bright and inspiring as that of the glorious sun.

“By the time I was thirty years old, I had reached the height of a man, and felt every inch of my hard-gained height. The rabbit could no longer jump over me and make me feel mean and small, as he had done years before. He had to run around me now, and I laughed at him and felt glad for every inch of my height. The snows of winter no longer bowed me down, as they had done when I was small, nearly breaking my back, and covering me until I could not see the world. I could now keep my head above even

a fair sized drift. But the ice storms I still feared, for they occasionally bowed me down so that they nearly broke my back.

“About this time, I bore my first cone, and if it needed anything more to make me vain, it was this. My parent, the great pine at the edge of the woods, had been rattling down cones ever since I could remember, and I had never had even a sign of a cone. When that first cone fell, I felt as though I had parted company with the most precious thing in the world, but when I found that they came every second year, I was comforted.

“When I was about forty years old, I had a narrow escape from destruction. Up to this time, all the men that I had known had been red men, and I wish they had been the only men the forest had ever known. If they had been, it would not be the sorry sight it is now. These quiet, nature-loving men came and went under the branches of the forest as silently as the deer and the panther. They seemed a part of the woods, and we looked for their coming and going as we did that of

the seasons. But finally the white man came. He awoke the forest with new and terrible lightning, before which the deer and the panther were powerless, and the red man melted away like the snowbanks in early spring. But worst of all, this white man brought with him an implement, keen and bright, which he calls an axe. Ever since the day of his coming the echoes of the axe have resounded through the forest, and one by one my kind have been laid low. As you know, I was the last of the first growth pines on the mountain side.

“As I have already said, when I was about forty years old, this white man came with his axe. The first time I saw him, he was blazing a wood road through the forest.

“He was picking out a path that should be smooth in winter, and as straight as he could make it, without too much work. He lopped down a sapling here, and a clump of bushes there, and every few feet, he stopped and blazed a tree. This blazed tree would show him the road when the snow was piled

so deep that other landmarks would be obliterated. He stopped close to me and sighted from one blazed tree to another. Would I be in the way? That was the question. He seemed to think I would, for he raised his axe. A shudder ran through me, and I thought of a maple sapling that he had just laid low. I knew I never would rise again, for I had seen trees blown over in a great storm and they never did.

“Then the man lowered his axe and stopped to consider. Perhaps I would not be in the way after all, or maybe the road would be too rough if it went just where I stood, for he changed the mark on the last tree, blazing the opposite side, and went on, and I was allowed to stand.

“All through the autumn and winter there were strange foreign sounds in the forest. For days at a time there would be the ceaseless ring of the axe and occasionally that thundering crash, that told of one of our number laid low. Then when the logs had been cut and piled, teams came into the woods

and loaded them and they were hauled down into the valley, where they were hewed into timber and builded into rude cabins. If anything more was needed to make me vain, it came when a pretty little pair of forest warblers built the daintiest nest, that ever you saw, in my boughs.

“To think that they had chosen me instead of some of the taller trees for their abiding place, filled me with such pride that it is a wonder that I did not crack my bark. All through summer they stayed with me going and coming from the nest, feeding and rearing their fledglings and I was the happiest, vainest little pine in all the great woods. When the strong winds howled in the tree-tops, bending them and sometimes even breaking off branches, I stood stiff-backed and resolute, and tried with all my sturdy might not to rock the little downhair lined nest among my green plumes lest I spill some of the joy that it contained.

“When at last the fledglings grew up and the whole family deserted me, I felt as lone-

some as a solitary tree out in the open, but I kept the nest for a long time as a remembrance.

“The second winter of the lumbering operations in the forest where I lived, something happened that filled me with grief and nearly wiped me off the face of the white snow-covered world as well. It also set me to thinking of how uncertain a thing life is, even for a small insignificant little pine.

“I had often seen the lumberman casting admiring glances at my sire the old sentinel pine, as they passed, but their admiration was the admiration of greed as I soon discovered. It does not pay to be too much admired in a covetous world like this. One day, one of the choppers came and began hacking away at the old pine, under whose protecting arm I had been reared. How grand he looked, and how small and insignificant these two puny wood-cutters! But how untiring they plied their axes, and what deep cuts those sharp blades made when they fell! I saw the white chips fly out on the

snow and wondered if it hurt my sire to have his sap chipped out like that. At first I thought he would be able to withstand them, I had seen him battle successfully with the hurricane so many times, but I soon saw that he was doomed, and a deep sense of loneliness came over me, even before I saw him laid low.

“ Finally I saw the two choppers looking up at the dark blue tip-top plumes of the giant tree, which were sharply silhouetted against the sky. Already the giant tree had begun to totter and waver, like an old man who leans upon his staff. First he swayed a bit one way, and then the other, and finally, with a great rush of wind that was like the roar of a mighty tempest, and a cloud of snow that was thrown up as it struck, the noble pine lay upon the breast of its mother earth, never to rise again.

“ My sire had fallen within ten feet of me, and, had I been struck, I should have been broken to bits.

“ Once, while they were limbing out the

great pine, one of the choppers said he would cut me down, as I was right in the way. I did not care much if he did, the fall of my sire had so saddened me, but the other chopper told him to notice how tall and straight I was, and how symmetrical. 'Some day that will be as fine a tree as this,' he said, so I was allowed to stand.

"When the great pine had been cut into logs and drawn away, there was a broad gap in the woods where it had stood. I now got a full blaze of sunlight and all the winds that had formerly buffeted the sentinel. The sun made me grow rapidly, and perhaps even the winds which I at first thought very cold and boisterous helped to develop me. At least they taught me to strike my roots deep in the earth and hold on with might and main.

"Fifty more years went by, and I stood at the edge of the forest where my sire had stood and took the buffets of the wind, and the smile of my foster father, the sun, and was glad, after the manner of a pine. Glad for the sunlight and the cold, the rain and

the dew; glad for the rich mold in which I stood, and for the blue sky above me.

“I could never tell you all my thoughts as I stood there, while spring and summer, autumn and winter, went by. Sometimes when the sun warmed my needles, a rich aromatic odor, full of sweet memories, the memories and longings of a pine, would float out on the merry breeze.

“I saw the beech and the maple put forth their first tiny buds and open their myriad leaves in the springtime, and I saw them stripped of all their glory in the autumn to make a carpet for the forest. They were changeable, sometimes gay and glorious in green or scarlet robes, but I was always the same. I never changed my deep blue green mantle, and to the nature lover I was always the dark, restful pine, perhaps sad, but I merely reflected the life about me, or maybe my melancholy was tinged by that of the wind, which was always moaning and sighing in my needles.

“Who shall guess my thoughts on lonely

winter nights, as I stood guard at the edge of the forest, when the Pleiades was so cold and glittering that it seemed like a panoply of spear points, and the six points of the Great Bear might have been six icicles? Who shall guess what things I saw when the prowling fox barked in the cavernous aisles of the snow-bound forest, while the weird hooting of an arctic owl woke mysterious echoes in the woods? Who but I knows just how the rabbits play tag of a winter's night, when the moon is at her full, and the crust glints and glistens like a pavement of diamonds?

“Was I lonely as I stood there, druid-like and hoary, with my coverlet of snow and ice, forsaken by the birds and squirrels, and by even the little wood-mouse that dwelt beneath my roots?

“Did I long for a sigh of the south wind, and a whisper from the sleeping hepatica, and arbutus; did I yearn for the coming of spring?

“Ah, who shall say? These are the inscrutable secrets of nature, that man with all

his inquisitiveness cannot find out. Men may hew and hack me, may saw and burn me, may grind me into pulp and make paper of me, but they will never tear this secret from my breast.

“Yon saw that howls like a demon and whose bright teeth are hungry for my heart will make man no wiser. The secret is nature’s own, and she guards it well.

“If you will count the rings upon my cross-section from one hundred and five to one hundred and nine, you will find that they come very close together. In fact they almost coincide, and only the very best eyesight can discern them. This, too, tells a bit of my history. These contracted rings represent three very cold summers and winters, due to a season of spots upon the sun. During these cold years the plants and trees grew very little, and even what they did grow in the summer was contracted and dwarfed in the winter.

“How ghastly and sickly my foster father, the sun, looked for these three years. How

feeble and unsatisfying his smile, that had usually been so warm and loving.

“ He was not like himself at all, and it was a great relief to me when he was again bright and cheerful.

“ It was the wind that finally humbled my pride and made me bow my haughty head. I had long thought I was the strongest thing in the world and I had no fear of wind or storm. Once I had been struck by lightning and I still bear the scar, one hundred and forty rings back from my bark, but I soon recovered from that.

“ But the wind, that went mad, and tore at the heart of the forest taught me the greatest lesson I ever learned and that was the lesson of humility. Then I understood that no matter how strong one may think himself there is always something stronger, that will some day humble him.

“ One afternoon early in August, when I was one hundred and fifty years old, the sky grew suddenly green and a strange calm was over everything.

“ Now for the earth to look green was all right, but for the sky to assume a strange copper colored green was all wrong, so the trees began stirring their leaves restlessly, although there was no wind, and one could not have discovered how it was done.

“ Then a green and yellow funnel, edged with pink and saffron, and fringed with black was seen trailing along the earth. When it drew nearer it was seen that there was a mighty commotion at the lower end of this funnel, where there was a churning and rolling and tumbling, with quick flashes of lightning, and fringes of cloud that looked like rain or mist.

“ The nearer the funnel-shaped cloud drew to the forest the more incessant became the churning and roaring and the brighter the lightning. The birds and the squirrels scurried to their hiding-places, and the two great fish-hawks that had built their nest in my branches that spring, flew screaming home.

“ On came this great seething, maddened funnel of wind and lightning, rain and hail,

filled with clouds of dust and sticks. As it drew nearer, trees and all kinds of débris were seen rolling and tumbling, grinding and breaking.

“When the cloud storm dipped down to the forest, great trees bent and broke or were blown over and uprooted. Giants that had withstood the tempests of centuries, went over like ninepins, and for the first time in my life I was afraid.

“At first when it struck me, I stood up proudly. I had never before bowed my head, and why should I now? But it only took a very few seconds for me to see the folly of such a course. So I bent and swayed, thrashed and writhed, and so far as I could, obeyed the cyclone. It stripped me of many of my branches and bent me down until my back was ready to break. Then with a roar like continuous thunder, and a constant play of lightning, with a torrent of hail and rain, and a blinding cloud of dust and débris of every kind, the cyclone sucked half of my blue green plumes of which I was so proud

into the whirling, seething vortex, and swept on, leaving me writhing, twisting, and groaning, torn, bent and bleeding with my bark hanging in long white shreds.

“How humiliated and crushed I felt as I tried to straighten my half broken back and untangle my split and broken limbs, from which many of the green plumes had been blown. I had been so proud but a few minutes before! Sure of my own great strength and thinking that nothing could make me bow my haughty head.

“That evening when the stars appeared and the soft night winds sighed in my torn plumes, the pale moon beheld not the haughty old sentinel pine, but an humble tree, most of whose symmetry and beauty had departed.

“But time heals all such wounds as these, and as the summers and winters came and went, the green plumes were again luxuriant upon my branches and new limbs appeared, or the old ones spread and branched, to cover up my fine trunk, and again I was symmetrical and beautiful as only a tree can be.

“After this my life went on peacefully and uneventfully for fifty years more. Men came and went in the valley below, crawling slowly like worms and from my great height they seemed like ants. They built their little block houses, and in them lived their lives of joy and sorrow, while I stood guard on the brow of the hill. Occasionally men came into the woods and hacked and scarred the ancient forest, but I went unscathed.

“The red man no longer camped under my friendly boughs and the deer and the bear, and the tall moose had disappeared from the forest. But I still had the birds and squirrels and all the small creatures whose pitter-patter in the leaves I knew so well.

“The jay and the crow nested in my branches and the red squirrel could make a fair meal upon my cones when he was hungry. But the fish-hawks, who had builded in my branches before the great storm, were gone. Their nests have been blown to bits, and one of the great birds killed in the cyclone.

“Many a little forest warbler also found

how good a resting place were my branches. So their love notes mingled in the springtime with the soft soughing of the wind in my needles.

“When I was about two hundred years old there came such a summer as I hope will never visit the earth again. Day after day the sun rose into a cloudless sky and set in a sea of brass. No soft white cloud cheered the parched earth with promise of rain. No dew fell at eventide and no rain fell for weeks and months. The old mill pond in the valley shrank to a mere pool, and the river that fed it nearly went dry.

“Springs that had not failed in the memory of man dried up, grass and shrubs were burned to a crisp, and dust and a terrible thirst was over all the land. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air seemed ill at ease. Cattle roamed restlessly to and fro, lowing and impatient. The great bald eagle that had made its nest in my top for several years circled about the mountain top screaming when there was nothing to enrage it.

Birds twittered uneasily and uttered their cries of alarm when there was seemingly nothing to alarm them. Some of the wild creatures even seemed to go mad because of the great thirst that had fallen upon the earth, and went snapping and snarling at their fellows. All living things seemed out of joint and well they might.

“One evening just at dusk there appeared a dull red glow that grew rapidly in intensity as the night wore on. Later on in the night it filled the sky with a cloud that obscured the stars and made the moon look like a sickly streak of yellow light.

“The next morning the sun rose in a blood red sky, and there was great activity among the creeping, crawling men down in the valley. Teams were set to work ploughing broad furrows about the home lots and preparing in other ways to keep their homes from the red demon that now mastered the eastern horizon.

“Great clouds of smoke rolled heavenward, obscuring the sun and casting a strange unearthly light over all.

“All things that could, fled before the oncoming demon. The buck and the doe galloped by on the wings of the wind.

“The nimble red fox, belly to earth, followed close behind them. In their wake ran a score of cottontails and gray rabbits, while the skunk and the woodchuck lumbered clumsily after them. Even the turtle brought up the rear, running a desperate race to the old mill pond.

“Great flocks of birds, squawking and calling whirred by. All were fleeing to a place of safety.

“But not so the sentinel pine. My roots were planted deep in the soil of the hillside, and hooked tightly about the solid rocks. I was anchored and unmovable, like the eternal hills. No matter how hot the air grew, or how dense with smoke, I must stay at my post like a good soldier and stand or fall as fate willed it.

“On came the red monster, licking up the grass and the ferns, the underbrush and the tall trees of the forest, with ten thousand red

tongues. Its roar was like the roar of the cyclone, and there were undertones and overtones, hissing and snapping, sputtering and cracking.

“The earth was so parched that the flames ran in the grass almost as fast as the deer and the foxes, while the main fire leaped from treetop to treetop over gaps of fifty feet.

“Whenever it came to a tall pine that was dry as tinder it leaped up as though it had caught in a powder mill and the flames shot heavenward two or three hundred feet. One by one I saw my tall neighbors wrapped in flames and I knew that my fate was sealed.

“Despair clutched me and I shivered like a human thing at the thought of what a gigantic funeral torch I would make. Then a rumble of distant thunder and a strong puff of west wind sent a thrill of hope through me. The rumble was followed by another and yet another, and then a peal of thunder woke the hillside. On came the flames vying with the thunder that now rolled incessantly. The flames in the underbrush reached my trunk

and began burning swiftly up. There was sixty good feet to climb, before my branches were reached, but I knew if once my top was kindled nothing could save me. Deeply the flames burned into my side, making a scar that I still carry, while the thunders rolled and the skies piled up angry clouds.

“The mighty sheets of flame that leaped from treetop to treetop, were only a furlong away when the flood gates of heaven were opened and I was saved from a terrible doom.

“Then how the rain fell, drenching the parched earth with great sheets of water that the dust drank up almost before it touched the earth. In five minutes the flames that had scorched my side for fifteen or twenty feet were out, and torrents of water were running in all the little gullies and every blade of grass was rejoicing in a language all its own.

“Baffled and subdued the flames hissed and sputtered, roared and cracked, but their fury was checked and they finally died out, leaving a long black waste behind them.

“ This was the last great tragic event in my life, that is, until I was laid low, just as my sire had been. For fifty years more after the great forest fire, I lived the quiet, peaceful life of a sentinel pine, spreading my plumes to heaven and adorning the brow of the mountain. Grand and majestic, a thing of wonder and beauty, a living, breathing spire of deep blue green, a landmark for the weary traveler for miles around.

“ One crisp December morning when I was something over two hundred and fifty years old, two men came and stood by me and talked and their conversation concerned me.

“ One was the grave old gentleman upon whose land I stood and who owned me, the other was a lumber merchant.

“ ‘ It’s a noble old tree,’ said my owner, passing his hand caressingly over my bark. ‘ It has stood here as the sentinel pine, looking just as it does now, ever since I can remember. In fact, when I was a boy it looked taller than it does now, but I suppose that was just my boyish fancy. It must be one hundred

and twenty-five feet tall, and sixty feet up to the first limb.

“ ‘ My great-grandfather said he could remember when it was much smaller, and his great-grandfather remembered when it was not much taller than a man. It seems like sacrilege to sell such a tree.’

“ ‘ Pooh,’ said the lumber merchant. ‘ If it stays here it will some day fall to earth of old age and then it will do no one any good. What is your price for the tree?’

“ ‘ One hundred and fifty dollars,’ said my owner, ‘ and I would not sell it at that price if I didn’t need the money. This pine is the most majestic and beautiful thing on the farm and I feel as though I was selling my own great-great-grandfather.’

“ The lumber merchant looked up at my straight symmetrical bowl and measured me with his eye. To his matter-of-fact vision I was just so many thousand feet of sawed lumber. It was plain to see that I pleased him, for he rubbed his hands together in a satisfied way and said, ‘ I’ll take it.’

“The next morning two wood-choppers came with axes and saws and I said good-bye to the forest and my native mountain, for my hour had come.

“Each time the bright blade of the axe sank into my flesh, there was a nipping, biting pain. Soon I felt a numbness creeping up the side upon which they were cutting. This numbness which was like a strange sleep crept to my first limbs, and then to my very tip-top plume.

“When they had cut in part way, in one side, they began on the other and soon that side too was numb. Gradually, like one who is heavy with sleep, the numbness enfolded me, then the white snow-capped hills and valleys faded from my sight. The sound of the wind died in the treetops and I began to waver, like an old man upon his staff.

“Then a few more keen axe strokes severed my heart, and with a rush and a roar that shook the mountain side, I fell and was no longer a tree, but several thousand feet of unsawed timber.”

"What a pity that you are dead," said the boy sympathetically.

"I am not exactly dead," said the old butt-log, in its deep rich voice, "but I am wonderfully changed. Nothing is quite dead until it disintegrates, and falls to dust.

"I still have great possibilities ahead. I am too valuable for men to allow me to pass out of existence like a useless thing.

"Who can say just what my future life will be? I am quite curious about it myself. True, yonder howling saw will work havoc with me as a butt-log, but I shall be something else when I am sawed.

"Perhaps I shall travel. Maybe I shall be the finishing stuff of a great ocean liner. Then will I ride the billowing deep and my fiber will sing the ancient song of the sea, where the wind howls in the rigging just as it does in the treetops of the forest.

"Perhaps as the floor stuff of a parlor car I shall travel from seaboard to seaboard, vibrating and thrilling to the song of thunder-

ing car wheels and listening all day to the click of steel rails.

"Maybe in the nursery little feet shall patter over me and baby tongues shall prattle above me.

"Or, if a higher destiny should happen to be mine, I might be the sounding board in a piano, that the master musician shall play. Then again would I vibrate with the joy of spring and the flush of summer. Or still better, the violin maker may find a piece of wood hundreds of years hence, that was once taken from my fiber. He may fashion a wonderful instrument from it. Then indeed would I again hear the wind in the pine needles and the melancholy dirge of autumn.

"So you see I am not dead, but changed when I am sawed up into boards."

"We want that log, sonny," said the sawyer, who had trundled out the car so quietly that the dreamer on the log had not heard him.

The boy scrambled down from his perch and watched the men roll the great log on to

the car and trundle it into the mill. When it had been put into place, he took his position on the car beside the log and rode back and forth while the old log was being sawed.

When the saw was not in motion it was a great silver disk, ragged as hooked and gleaming teeth could make it, but when it was in motion it was a misty blurr round as a cart-wheel and without a sign of a tooth upon it.

When the carriage moved forward and it struck the butt-log of the ancient pine, it howled in demoniacal glee and whenever it struck a knot it fairly shrieked.

One by one the white fresh boards were sawed from the great log, until one was reached that arrested the attention of the men at the saw.

In the middle of this board was a panel where the wood was worn away and polished as white as bone and quite as hard.

"Look at that, Jim," said the sawyer to his helper. "Pretty bad scar, ain't it? What you guess did it?"

"Fire," said the small boy on the carriage,

who was watching every board taken from the old log.

"That is right," said the sawyer, "it was a forest fire. Must have happened more than fifty years ago, but how did the kid know?"

The boy blushed and looked ashamed, but said nothing and the sawing went on.

When the mammoth log had been sawed and placed upon another car to be run into the yard and stacked, the sawyer said, "Sixteen hundred feet in one butt-log. Well, that breaks the record!"

"Gracious, sonny," he exclaimed, when he had finished figuring, "seems to me you'll be late to school. Bell must have rung half an hour ago."

"That's so," said the boy, catching up his dinner pail and starting down the gangplank on a run. "I was so interested in the old log I forgot," but all the rest of the way to school he marvelled at the beauty and mystery of the old pine's story and was deeply grateful that he had eyes to see and a heart to understand these things.

CHAPTER II
THE STORY OF WILLOW BROOK



CHAPTER II

The Story of Willow Brook

THE boy with a dinner pail sat on the end of a little rustic bridge, dangling his bare feet over the cool water and listening to the pleasant murmur of the stream.

Above, and about him was a canopy of willow and alder bushes, and beneath was a deep trout-haunted pool. An occasional sun-beam pierced the green coverlet of alder and willow and fell upon the rippling, dimpling water. Where it slanted down through the green it was a pencil of gold, but where it touched the water it broke into many rainbow hues.

A dragon fly with jewelled eyes and iridescent wings hummed viciously through, under the bridge, causing the boy to draw up

his feet quickly. He had a horror of dragon flies, because he shared with other small boys that queer superstition, about the dragon fly sewing up the ears of those who angered him. The boy was of course quite sure the bright colored insect did not really possess that power, but there was just enough mystery about the legend to make it awesome.

A wood thrush perched in the alders almost within hand's reach, and poured forth a wonderful song. Further down the stream a catbird mimicked the song exactly and then squawled derisively.

As the boy sat upon the bridge leaning against the post at one end, his cap on the planks beside him, with the sweet smell of fern and flag and pungent willow in his nostrils, the spirit of the waters touched his ears with a magic reed, and he heard new tones in the song of the stream and at last understood its gurgling and prattling as he had never done before.

At first he understood only a part of what the rivulet was saying, but finally his heart

was opened and the language of the waters was made plain.

“ I am willow brook,” the little stream began, “ and I am older than you can possibly imagine. Many a stream goes dry and is lost because the timber is cut off near its source, or the land is drained, but very few new streams are formed. So the streams are older than anything made by man, older than the oldest trees that have stood for centuries, and almost as old as the wrinkled hills.

“ If you would get some idea of how old I am just follow me back by a score of bridges, and as many meadows, by half a dozen mill ponds and as many water wheels, through deep forests and over jagged cliffs, to the place of my beginning, which is far up on the mountain side.

“ There you will find a seam in the solid rock from which gush the living waters. A foot or two below is a basin holding several gallons of water.

“ At the time when some upheaval, or perhaps it was the frost, broke the rock open,

and I gushed forth, there was no basin to hold my pure stream. I made the basin with my own gentle lapping. If you were to pour water upon a rock for your entire lifetime you probably could not see that you had worn away the rock; but I with my constant dripping have made this deep broad basin. I do not measure time in years and so do not know how long ago the rock opened and I began work upon the basin, but many times the forest about me has fallen beneath the tooth of time while I worked away at my task. Long, long before the white man ever set foot upon this continent the red man used to come to my basin to drink.

“ In those days I was called the ‘ fount of healing.’ There were many substances in the rock from which I sprung that had medicinal qualities, such as sulphur and iron, which purify and renew the blood. Some of these qualities I have lost, as the iron and the sulphur are nearly all washed from the rock, but I am still the living water full of sweet, healing qualities.

“ In those old days when the ancient forest was unbroken, and primeval wilderness and grandeur was about me, the doe led her little dapple fawn to the bank and drank of me. The woodcock and the jacksnipe reared their young upon my bank, and bored for worms in the loam that I cast up. The wood duck led forth her fledglings to my bosom, and was not afraid.

“ Often the red man came to my deep pools for fish and I gave him plenty, for then the streams swarmed with fish. In those sweet old days I was wild and free, for I had not been dammed and harnessed to do the work of men.

“ How well I remember the first dam that checked my course and how I have worked ever since at that mill. One day the new, pale faced man who was a stranger in the great woods came to my banks and began felling trees at the lower end of a little valley and almost before I had guessed their design they had entirely checked my course. How angry I was to be stopped in this way. I

knew that many pools and waterfalls below would dry up if I tarried, but work away as I would, I could find no escape through this wall that men had placed in my way.

“ At first I sought to go under the dam, or through some of the many small cracks that had been left in the structure. But there was no passage under the strong dam, and the holes were soon filled with wash from the stream and I was left fretting in confinement.

“ Then I sought to go round the ends of the dam, but man had builded it long and strong and as it is one of the laws of my being that I cannot flow uphill, I soon found that I could not go round, so I waited, making a broad deep pool, abiding my time. If I was not strong enough to cope with this artifice now I might be later on. But the surface of the pond near the dam was covered with froth for I foamed and fretted at being held.

“ I had never before been checked so effectively. Once the beaver had dammed my course, but had finally concluded that my

current was too swift and had sought another stream.

“ Finally after about a week, I had filled the dam full to the top and I knew that my liberty was near at hand. So one morning without as much as saying, by your leave, I tumbled over the dam with a great roar, and went laughing on my way.

“ How glad the pools and the meadows below were to see me. They had thought I had lost my way, and were nearly dried up with grief. The meadows had lost their greenness and freshness, and many of the shallow pools were nearly dry. The fish had fared hard, and some of my choice clumps of lily-pads were dead. But everything took on a new beauty when I appeared and this helped me to realize how important I was after all. But not all of my water escaped over the top of the dam, for man had fashioned a long dark tunnel underground and part of my flow went through that.

“ At the end of this tunnel was a queer round box, into which I rushed, making it go

round and round, but I finally escaped, all white and foaming with anger.

“ Sometimes the passage leading to the tunnel was shut, but much of the time it was open.

“ When I rushed into this queer box and sent it spinning round and round, it turned other round things, and there was a great humming and roaring in the house above.

“ Finally I understood what an important work I was doing in this mill, which ground the grist for many miles around, then I was glad that I could help. Some days I was obliged to turn the wheels all day long, but it made many people glad.

“ This was the first of a dozen dams that were built upon my course and finally I was made to do many kinds of work. I not only ground corn and wheat, but sawed logs and turned the loom that made cloth to keep men and women warm. Mine has been a useful life, ever since the rock was cleft and I spouted forth into the light of day.

“ After the white man came, the red man.

the deer and the great moose soon ceased to frequent my banks.

“Also the geese and ducks became less numerous. But I still possess much that is interesting to one who loves the sound of running water, and the fragrance of sweet flag and water lilies.

“Every autumn the speckled trout swims far up my winding way to my many branches, to spawn. The eggs are covered up and left to hatch, when the spring sun shall warm the water sufficiently.

“In the springtime I am the nursery of many kinds of spawn. The trout and the red fin, the dace and the bullhead, the great green bullfrog and the lizard, and many small crustaceans are all cradled in my current.

“Each mossy stone, and each sandy shallow is a hatchery. Then all my sparkling current teems with life.

“While the rich larvæ, shining like gold, feed all lower forms of life.

“In the springtime the cowslip unfolds her

chalice of gold above me and the sweet flag and the cattail again put on their green. Then water grasses and willows blossom, and my banks are fragrant and sweet with the glad new life.

“Late in June the water lily unfolds and makes fragrant my deep pools. Then the wood duck, the sandpiper, the woodcock and the bittern lead forth their young, and my banks are a nursery for the fowls of the air.

“Little children, too, love to sport in my shallows, and catch shiners and polly-wogs. Men and boys seek me and dangle their lines in my depths, angling for my speckled trout, and the whole countryside for many miles around is glad because they know Willow Brook.

“Many a great lesson of life I teach, if men would only heed my teachings.

“I teach the lesson of purity and cleanliness as no other thing in nature does. To-day you may fill me with unclean things, but to-morrow I will run as sweet and pure as ever. No matter how bright the stars are

they can always find their reflection in my bosom. I teach the lesson of industry, for I am never idle. I turn the mill that feeds the world. I water the meadow, enrich the barren places of earth. I lave and feed the roots of plants and trees and make my world fresh and glad.

“I never go backward as men often do, but my motto is always onward, towards deeper and broader things. I am always stronger to-day than I was yesterday.

“I am not afraid of being lost or forgotten, even though I mingle with larger streams and am seemingly lost. My water drops are still there doing their little part. Even though I at last mingle with the great ocean, with the current of a thousand streams, yet will I return to the cloud, and sing through the meadow again. Again will the cowslip and the lily open their hearts at my touch and the meadow be glad at my coming.

“I cannot linger for longer even under this rustic old bridge, where the willow and the alder greet me and all whisper for me to stay,

“ ‘ But out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.’ ”

CHAPTER III
'A LITTLE DAPPLE FOOL'

CHAPTER III

'A Little Dapple Fool

THE misty morn hung low on the eastern hilltops and the earth waited expectantly for the dawn of day. The first evidence of its coming had been a long low fleecy cloud that hung like a curtain over the hilltops. At first the cloud had been cold like a shroud with not even a suggestion of warmth, but gradually tints of pink and saffron had crept into its centre and the whole had been transfused with a wonderful glow.

Now it vibrated and trembled in the balance, half vapor and half light, like a nicely adjusted scale which would turn in either direction at the slightest touch.

Suddenly, as though by magic, the veil parted, the pink and saffron grew and deepened in intensity and the round smiling face

of the sun peeped through the gossamer veil and all the birds in the treetops set up a great chirping and twittering; the squirrels chattered, and all the four-footed creatures became vocal, each after its kind.

This was the morning greeting of the furred and feathered folks to the warm sun whose coming cheered and gladdened them.

An hour before a dainty doe had gone down into the valley, stepping lightly and daintily, as does her kind, in search of her breakfast.

Her little dappled fawn, whom she had left hidden in the top of a fallen tree, was a great strain upon her and the mother was as ravenous as a wolf.

But there was plenty of good feed in the valley and as the deer were protected by law, there was little danger in her going. So fearless had the deer become that her mate, the proud, heavy antlered buck, who had lived in and about the mountain for several years, frequently grazed in the neighboring pastures with the cattle.

The little dapple fawn was asleep when his mother had left, but the lesson necessary to his safety had been faithfully taught him and the instinct of his ancestors was in his veins.

He was concealed in the very thickest part of the treetop and his mother had to make a great jump to reach him without trampling down the boughs and thus betray their whereabouts.

Presently he saw bright pencils of light streaming through his treetop and the birds began singing in the woods for very joy. Then he knew that it was daylight and that his mother would soon be back.

With the coming of the sunbeams the scent of the pine needles was quickened into life, and a dozen wonderful fragrances stirred into being upon the puffs of the fresh morning breeze. All nature seemed new and vital, revived and quickened by the sparkling dew-drops that trembled on the petals of each wild flower and which gemmed even the weeds as well.

There was a chink between the foliage of the fallen treetop through which the fawn amused himself by staring with mild, wide-open eyes. Now, in the absence of his mother, he fell to watching the life about him through his small window in the green plumes of the fallen tree.

Presently, something caught his eye that arrested his attention and held it with a fearful fascination that he could not shake off. Though it terrified him for some reason to look at what he saw, yet the sight held him, and he could not even shut his eyes.

A few rods down the mountain side a great, gray cat was creeping stealthily through the woods, stopping every now and then, with one paw upraised, to listen and to test the wind.

This cat, like the doe down in the valley, was a wild mother, and the pangs of hunger gnawed at her vitals. Three blind kittens in a hollow fallen basswood were waiting for her, and it needed all her natural cunning to feed herself and her kittens.

The wind was blowing the scent of the hidden fawn in the treetop straight away from her, but it blew the strong body scent of the cat full in the fawn's widely extended nostrils. He had never smelled anything like it before and some wild instinct told him that it was a fearful scent, fraught with danger.

A strong impulse was on him to bell wildly for his mother, whom he felt sure would come running and drive away this fearful prowler. But silence had been one of the lessons his wild mother had enjoined, so he stifled his terror and lay with tense, quivering muscles, while the great cat drew nearer and nearer.

At last, the hunting wildcat crept to within ten paces of the treetop and stood watching and listening, testing the wind, with all her nerves intent upon discovering game. She had not even scented the fawn as the wind, which was strong, blew directly away from her, but she had noticed deer signs and knew that a doe had been that way this morning.

The fawn staring wide-eyed through his chink in the foliage lay as still as death, but

his eyes were fastened intently upon the intruder.

The great cat looked doubtfully this way and that but nothing seemed stirring in this quarter. She sat down on her stub of a tail to consider which thicket to hunt next. The heaviness of her night's sleep had not been entirely thrown off for she had just come from her lair, so she opened her great mouth, showing her ferocious visage at its fiercest, and yawned.

To the little watcher peeping through his window in the treetop, this was the last straw. It filled him with uncontrollable terror. With a pitiful bell of fear, he bounded from the treetop and ran wildly down the mountain side, fear lending wings to his hoofs.

Probably a more astonished wildcat never stood on the mountain side than the old huntress. But her flash of astonishment was instantly swept away by her primitive instinct of the hunt.

The fleeing fawn had not taken three jumps when she was after him, springing



THE FAWN HAD NOT TAKEN THREE JUMPS WHEN
SHE WAS AFTER HIM



twice to his once, and overhauling him rapidly.

Half a dozen rods further down the hillside, in the peaceful aisles of the tranquil woods, where the birds sang and the dew sparkled on the grass, the helpless dappled creature was borne to earth.

With a mighty bound the wildcat landed fairly upon his back and he went down, almost without a struggle, and the cat's powerful jaws soon silenced his pitiful bleating.

A few minutes later she was dragging the lifeless carcass further down the hillside that she might hide it in a deep thicket, where the prowling fox, and the crow, and owls, should not find it.

A trail of broken-down ferns and weeds marked their going, and bloodspots sparkled among the dewdrops.

The little fawn had paid the penalty for disobedience, the price that is always exacted in the wild.

Half an hour later when the wild mother returned, something told her from afar that

all was not well with her little one. Was it mother love that made her so keen to see danger for her offspring? She came running half fearfully to the treetop and jumped into the fawn's hiding-place as usual, but it was empty.

With a bell of wounded mother love, she sprang out again, and ran frantically hither and thither, her terror and frenzy growing each minute.

Into every thicket she peered wild-eyed and helpless.

The great cat heard her running frantically by her lair as she lay licking her chops and purring contentedly over her blind kittens. Her belly was full, her milk would flow freely now and there would be no more hunger in the cat family for several days.

CHAPTER IV
THE FAMILY OF BOB-WHITE



CHAPTER IV.

The Family of Bob-White

BLITHE, cheerful little Bob-White sat on the top of a barpost whistling his merry call, "bob-white, bob, bob-bob-white, bob-white, bob, bob-white."

Bob-White was very well satisfied with the whole world that spring morning, and with his own lot in particular, for something told him in the plainest kind of language that spring had come. In fact all the birds that he had seen this morning had been talking about it, and Bob-White knew just enough of their language to understand. What else did blue bird mean by his sweet "cheerily, cheerily," and Cock Robin, by his lusty "cheerup, cheerup." Still more convincing than either of these, was a great noisy flock of wild geese that swung rapidly across the

spring sky, flinging afar to the brown earth their strong clear water slogan of "honk, honk, honk."

Bob-White, like the rest of the quail in the vicinity, had just passed through a very severe winter, so was it any wonder that he whistled his merriest tune this balmy morning?

Each time when he stopped whistling he hopped down on the top bar of the gateway and strutted back and forth like a veritable turkey cock. First, he would extend one wing to its full sweep, then the other, and finally spreading both wings and his comical short tail he would strut up and down saying in his every motion, "now if you want to see a fine bird just look at me."

He was not a showy bird, although his suit was neat and quite jaunty. His back and shoulders were a combination of brown and gray, while his undersides were lighter. The feathers on the top of his head were rather inclined to stand up like a pompadour, and under his throat was a white necktie. The

most that could be said for such a dress was, that it was not conspicuous, and so was not calculated to attract the eyes of any of Bob-White's enemies, such as hawks, owls, or men.

But Bob-White was whistling for something else beside good spirits this morning. He was whistling for a wife.

Presently from down across the fields as though in answer to his calling came a clear, "white, white, white," or if you had been in a more romantic frame of mind you might have thought that the clear low whistling said, "here, here, here."

Bob-White heard it, and was pleased with the effect of his own musical voice, so he redoubled his calls of "bob-white, bob-white," and listened at regular intervals for the musical "white, white, white," that came in return.

When this calling and answering had gone on for some time Bob-White flew away to investigate, and his wings made such a whirring and struck so fast that this fact alone proclaimed him a member of the partridge family. He is the smallest of all the partridges,

and is known in parts of the south as the Virginia partridge.

While Bob-White is making love to a shy lady quail down in the thicket, let us briefly consider his short life up to this morning, that you may know why he was so glad spring had come, and why the answering call from the thicket had been so sweet to his ears.

The latter part of May, the previous spring, Bob-White had been merely one of fifteen eggs lying cunningly concealed in a nest made on the ground under a brush fence.

About the middle of June all of these fifteen eggs had begun to manifest signs of life, and in about fifteen minutes after the first tiny bill appeared, the whole brood was hatched.

They were no featherless, hairless, gawky fledglings, but bright, alert chicks fairly well clad, and as smart as crickets.

In a few hours they were following their mother about picking up their living just as though they had done nothing else for years.

But an evil fate had pursued the brood from the very day of hatching. When they

were a week old a weasel happened upon them in the night, and before their vigilant little mother had been able to scatter and hide them, he sucked the blood of three, and the family was reduced to an even dozen.

A grub or louse had claimed two more within another week, and the family was down to ten. The next thief to come among them was the sparrow-hawk, who took one in each claw at a single swoop, leaving but eight; these eight, however, lived until the hunting season opened in the autumn, when four of them went into a game bag before they even thought of scattering and thus diminishing their peril.

After that ominous day they never knew just when the deafening banging would begin, and they were not left in peace for many days at a time.

When the season finally closed, there were two chicks and one of the old birds left. Only three out of seventeen, the original family.

In addition to such bad luck as this the following winter had been exceptionally hard.

The scattered grain, and the weed-seeds had been covered by the first snow-storm, and they did not appear again until the warm spring rains uncovered the brown earth, so the quail had to depend entirely upon the winter berries and buds for sustenance.

The bright red berries of the sumac, the bitter-sweet, and the purple berries of the Virginia creeper, had stood them in good stead. Also juniper and poison ivy berries had furnished them many a meal.

When these were all gone they went into the deep woods and scratched about fallen logs for partridge berries or occasionally discovered a wind-swept knoll where checker-berries could be found.

With such scant food as this, and with seed obtained from an occasional tall weed, that stuck its friendly head above the snow they had managed to live until February, but finally even this supply gave out, and they resorted to their last hope, and visited a farm-yard in the vicinity.

Each day they went to the barnyard, and

scratched in the dung-heap for particles of grain. It was while feeding in this manner that the house-cat took one, and the quail family was reduced to a pair. But they still came to the farmyard, as they could do nothing else.

Bob-White and his sister clung very closely to one another now they were all that was left of the large quail family, but one night while they were sleeping side by side in a tangle of bitter-sweet and fir tree, a great owl reached in his strong talons and took one, and Bob-White was left alone in the great world.

But this had happened only two or three weeks before the time when our story begins, and Bob-White had found food in plenty shortly after the owl had deprived him of his companion.

At first, Bob-White could not locate the shy little lady quail who had been calling to him from the thicket; but he finally discovered her picking away for dear life at weed-seed, just as though breakfast was much more to her taste than love making.

For a long time she would take no notice of him but he strutted up and down so persistently that she finally looked up. Even then, her manner plainly said, "Why, where in the world did you come from; I did not suppose there was a bob-white anywhere in this region?" Little by little, Bob-White gained her goodwill until at last she would let him help her scratch for weed-seeds. They spent a very pleasant forenoon together and the thing was as good as settled.

The following morning, Bob-White was again perched on his barpost whistling his cheery call-note, but when the answer came up clear from the thicket, "white, white, white," and he flew down to meet his intended, sad to relate, another bob-white was helping her hunt for weed-seed.

Then her own particular Bob-White flew at his rival and a cock fight began which would have been most comical had not the combatants been so deadly in earnest. They lowered their heads and came at each other in true game-cock style, striking with beak and

wing and sometimes even buffeting one another over.

But our own Bob-White was fighting for his rights, for the admiration and affection of his mate and the nest they intended to build, while the other was merely an intruder; so, having right on his side, he soon punished his rival severely and he flew away discomfited.

When the field was clear and Bob-White had been left conqueror, he went up to his fickle wife and gave her a savage peck on the head as much as to say, "You faithless hussy, if it had not been for you, I should not have had all this trouble."

Only once more did a rival dare to make love to Mrs. Bob-White, and then the intruder was driven away as before and the wife punished for her faithlessness.

This honeymoon lasted for about ten days and then Mr. and Mrs. Bob-White selected a place for their nest. It was under the edge of an old fallen log, well screened from view and sheltered from the rain. Each day for about two weeks Mrs. Bob-White deposited

an egg in the nest, until the number was sixteen, then began her arduous task of incubation.

Two or three times during that long three weeks Mr. Bob-White took his turn upon the eggs for half an hour while his wife went for a dust bath.

There are ornithologists who accuse Bob-White of being a bigamist, but I do not believe that he ever woos the second wife until after the first chicks have hatched, and that might be called a lawful second marriage. I do not doubt, however, but that he would flirt with a coquettish lady quail even while his own faithful wife was sitting on the eggs if chance offered.

About the twentieth of June Mrs. Bob-White appeared, closely followed by fourteen quail chicks. She was clucking and bristling like the good little mother partridge that she is, and each of the tiny chicks was spry as a cricket. It had not been necessary for the old birds to carry food to these nestlings. After the first tiny little creature had picked

his way through the shell, his lusty peep had set all the others to work and in half an hour the whole brood had arrived. Then, when they had dried and had a little time in which to gain strength, they were ready for the world.

Forth they all came, the mother clucking and bristling and the chicks scampering this way and that, pecking at almost invisible plant-lice and bugs and feeding themselves within the same hour that they came from the nest.

For two or three nights Mrs. Bob-White led them back to the old nest, but after that it was given up and they never returned to it.

One night when they were about a week old Mrs. Bob-White led them to sleep in a little hollow under an overhanging rock. During the night there was a terrible down-pour of rain and the hollow filled rapidly. Before the young mother could conduct her chicks to higher and drier ground, three were drowned in the puddle.

After this, there were no fatalities in the

quail family for nearly two months. For the first two weeks Bob-White hovered about his family trying to protect them and giving his wife much good advice about bringing up children; but she finally told him that she could get along quite well without him, and he took her at her word.

The August moon hung large and luminous above the eastern hills. There was the smell of ripening fruit and maize on the summer night air and the cricket and the katy-did were singing in the grass. Sweet corn was already in the milk, but the field corn was not yet ripe enough for the palate of the fastidious raccoon.

Down from the deep woods came Mr. Raccoon shuffling and shambling like the real little bear that he is. About his eyes were two black circles looking like spectacles and around the tip of his nose was a white ring. His tail also was ringed. There is not another such suit as his in the entire wilderness east of the Rocky Mountains. Out of the woods he came and across the pasture he shuf-

fled, eager, alert, and watchful, often stopping to test the air and poke his inquisitive nose under a log or flat stone.

Soon a fresh puff of night wind brought him a most exciting scent. He knew it quite well. It was that of a bevy of quail in hiding. The old raccoon knew just how they stood in that circular bunch with their tails all together and their heads looking outward, that they might face in every direction.

He flattened himself to the ground and crept forward on his belly almost as still as a cat. He was no longer the clumsy little bear but the cautious hunter. Once he heard the bevy stirring uneasily in their sleep as though they had knowledge of coming danger. Then he lay very still and waited until the mother bird's "creets" and the soft peeps of the chickens had ceased. He now crept forward again. Nearer and nearer he drew, going more cautiously with each succeeding step, until at last he was within springing distance. He then flattened himself out on the ground, intensified all his muscles until they were like

steel and with a sudden motion sprang full in the midst of the sleeping bevy.

Click, click, click, went his jaws, snapping like lightning in every direction.

There was the sudden whirr of many wings and a chorus of squeaks, peeps, and squawks from a dozen birds and in three seconds' time the bevy were gone with the exception of two wounded birds who fluttered feebly in the grass. But a bite apiece from Mr. Raccoon soon stopped their fluttering. Then the hunter lay down where, a few minutes before, the quail family had slept and made his supper of quail, without toast.

August and September came and went and the quail family grew plump upon grain and weed-seed but the loss of grain to the farmer was more than offset by the weed-seed they destroyed.*

October with its corn in the shock and golden pumpkins and harvested grain and fruit was with us when another hunter came

* It has been estimated by the agricultural department of the United States that the quail in Maryland and Virginia annually destroy two hundred and fifty tons of weed-seed.

down from the great wood in quest of warm blood. This hunter did not shuffle as the old raccoon had done, but his gait was a steady trot. When the night wind stirred, bearing the delicious fragrance of witch-hazel, one might have noticed a musky, pungent odor from the night prowler. It was Red-Fox, the wise and the witty, and a much more successful hunter than the old raccoon.

He, too, got a scent of quail down in the pasture and followed it eagerly. His step was swift and sure and his nose was keen. Swiftly like a dark shadow he advanced until he located the sleeping quail under an old brush fence. Then he crept forward foot by foot until he was almost upon them, when with a sudden spring he darted into their midst.

Again, there was the sudden whirr of many wings and cries of fear and pain, mingled with the rapid click, click, of the fox's jaws. When the bevy was gone and Mr. Fox nosed about under the fence he found he also had bagged a pair of quail.

No more misfortunes befell the quail family until the first day of the open season. Then a party of sportsmen with dogs and guns drove them from cover to cover, while the guns cracked merrily. It was a cold, raw day of scudding clouds and biting winds that plainly told of coming winter. This, added to the incessant roar of firearms, made that day like the crack of doom to the family of Bob-White.

Towards night, a biting sleet and rain-storm set in and the hunting ceased, but the quail family had been scattered in every direction and their friends at the farmhouse wondered if any had survived, so the old man and small boy went out into the storm to look for the quail. The old man went ahead with a long, swinging stride while the small boy trotted after him.

How cheerless was the sound of the hail rattling upon the dead leaves and grass, and the moaning of the winds in the treetops! All the joy and gladness seemed to have departed from the naked, forsaken earth.



HE CREPT FORWARD FOOT BY FOOT UNTIL HE
WAS ALMOST UPON HIM



These two had followed the fortunes of the quail family from the very first. They had discovered the nest under the old log and had visited it several times during incubation. They had fished the three water soaked chicks out of the puddle after the rain-storm where the folly of their mother had been only too apparent.

They had also happened upon the remains of the old raccoon's supper, scattered about near that circle of footprints. The depredations of Red Fox they had likewise discovered while repairing the brush fence. They had also seen the quail many times in neighboring grain fields and had heard their cheery "more-wet" before each rain-storm; so was it any wonder that their hearts were heavy to-night?

The old man vaulted lightly over the bar-way into the pasture while the boy crawled between the bars. They went on for fifteen or twenty rods and then crawled under a clump of small spruces and sat down where the leaves were still dry.

Suddenly, from their very midst, came a clear shrill whistle, pure and sweet as the note of a piccolo, "bob-white, bob-white, bob-bob-white."

"They are right here in the bush, Ben," exclaimed the boy in an eager whisper, pulling excitedly at his companion's sleeve.

The old man chuckled and laughed softly. "That was me," he whispered. "I had my hand over my mouth so you could not tell where the sound came from." Again he repeated the musical call and both waited and listened. Then, faint and far across the pasture land, like an echo, came the reply, "bob-white, bob-white, bob-bob-white."

"That's him," whispered Ben. "Now keep perfectly still and you will hear something worth while."

Presently the two watchers under the little spruces heard the well-known whirr of short, fast beating wings, and a second later Bob-White himself plumped down under the cover within two yards of them. He shook the wet from his wings, preened his feathers for a

moment and then swelling out his breast, uttered his sweet call-note. It was useless for the old man to call now that the real Bob-White had sounded his roll call so they waited, and listened.

Again came the low whistle from far away in the pasture land but this time it was only, "white, white, white." Soon the swift whirr of beating wings was heard and a moment later the second quail alighted under the scrub spruce.

"Cureet, cureee, cur-r, cure-e-e," cried Bob-White in soft, quail words of love and welcome. "Peep, pure-e-, e-e, e-e," replied the chicken.

The greeting and response were scarcely over when another quail whirred under the bush and another, and still another.

"Cureet, cure-e-e, cur-r, cure-e-e," was the salutation of Bob-White to each newcomer as they huddled together and rejoiced in bird language that they had found one another again. After a few minutes they quieted down and the listeners knew that they had

formed themselves into the well-known bunch and fallen asleep, so they stole quietly away, leaving them dry and comfortable under the spruce, but it was only part of the family, Bob-White and four of his chicks; the little hen and the other four had gone away in the hunter's game bag.

December and January came and went and the leafless, flowerless world was in the clutch of midwinter. Day after day the snow fell and the cold was so intense that sometimes in the deep woods the stout heart of maple or birch was cracked asunder.

One morning, when the small boy who had gone to the pasture that night with Old Ben to search for the quail awoke, he found the world ice-clad and snow-bound and in the clutch of a terrible freeze. The windows were so clouded with frost that he could not see out until he had melted it with his breath, but when the frost had been melted, the boy cried out with grief, for there upon the window-sill huddled close to the glass was the stiff, stark form of his Bob-White.

He had died with his breast to the window pane with only a sixteenth of an inch of transparent something between him and the warmth that would have saved him. As pitilessly as the glacier grinds the pebble to sand the great freeze had pressed him against the window until his stout little heart was still, and then, as though ashamed of what she had done, nature had shrouded him in a white mantle of snow.

With difficulty the boy raised the window and took the dead quail in his hands. Carefully he brushed the snow from his gray brown coat and smoothed out his ruffled feathers.

It was a far cry from that warm spring morning, when he had first seen him on the old barpost whistling his cheery call, to this snow-bound frozen world that seemed more dead than alive. Poor little Bob-White; he had eluded the hawk, the owl and the weasel, the fox, the raccoon and the hunter, but the great freeze had caught him, so near and yet so far from cover. With a sigh the boy put

him back in the little snow grave on the window-sill and shut the window. There he would let him lie in his soft coverlet of ermine until the great storm was over.

CHAPTER V
THE BUSY BEE



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The Busy Bee

THERE is no more pleasant recollection of boyhood and its pleasures than that of bee hunting. I never visit the country in July or August even now without getting the old fever to take a bee box and try my luck again in tracking the honey-bee through the blue sky to his honey laden tree.

City bred people may often have wondered about the phrase "a bee line," but they never would had they lined fugitive bees to their tree. Once the bee has filled her honey stomach a shaft of light is not more straight than the line she makes for the tree.

How full of bird song and sunlight, of dew laden grass, and perfume of flowers and shrubs are these memories of bee hunting.

In boyhood days, bare brown feet brushed the dew, sparkling like diamonds, from the grass. If the man goes bee hunting he must wear shoes and thus lose half the fun.

What excitement there was, once we got a line on the tree. Over fences and stone walls we raced, through swamps and brooks. No hill was too steep, and no thicket too dense to be penetrated, as long as we kept the fugitive bee in sight, or at least kept the line upon the tree.

To most of the readers of this book the privilege and education of bee hunting will be denied, but many of you can avail yourselves of a very good substitute, and that is the study of the beehive, even though it be the back yard of your city home. I know many a man who keeps bees with both profit and pleasure within the city limits of some large metropolis. So if you cannot go bee hunting, study the hive, and you can learn most of the secrets that the country boy learns following the bee line to the honey laden tree.

One has merely to take his stand near the

hive on some warm summer day, when the honey flow is at its height, at about noon to realize fully how true is the old proverbial phrase, "as busy as a bee."

"Hum, hum, zip, zip, hum." They come like bullets in a lively skirmish, a steady stream, all laden with the sweet of every honey flower that blooms within a radius of three miles. It matters not whether the hive is composed of black native, hybrids, golden banded Carniolas, or pure Italians, the story is just the same, "hum, hum, zip, zip, hum." All bringing home some of that delicious sweet which the wonderful chemistry of sun and rain, dew and mould have distilled.

But no idler gains entrance to the hive, for if the honey stomach which is just in front of the real stomach, is not well filled, it fares hard with the lazy one.

No military camp was ever guarded more rigidly against the intrusion of the enemy, than is the hive against the laggard, and against thieves from other hives.

From a dozen to a score of good soldiers

stand guard all day, with spears in readiness. Each bee who enters has to possess the password of a well filled honey sack, or the odor of her own particular hive, or she will never gain entrance.

If fifty hives were set up in a row, and each hive contained from twenty-five to fifty thousand bees, that rule of every bee to her own hive would be as rigidly enforced as though there were only two hives instead of fifty. Does each hive have a password so that its inhabitants are known from those of several hundred other hives, or does each bee possess physiological characteristics, that differentiate her from all the others? These, and other explanations have been proposed by naturalists, from time to time, but all such explanations have been rejected as visionary and impractical.

Naturalists are now agreed that the sentinels at the entrance to the hive recognize their own by the sense of smell alone. Even so, how keen must be that sense, when a hundred hives are to be discriminated between.

Truly these little folks who gather sweets for us, put our simple notions of biology to a severe test, when we undertake to explain some of the simplest things about the hive.

“Hum, hum, zip, zip, hum, hum.” From how far afield does this colony come, and which are its most favored flowers?

All through the winter the swarm was dormant, huddling together in a conical shaped mass. By constantly changing their position, so that the bees on the inside of the mass came to the outside, while those outside got inside they kept warm. On warm days when the thermometer touched forty, there was uneasiness in the bunch, and occasionally a bee more active than her fellows crawled out to see how the winter was progressing. The sugar maker occasionally fishes a bee out of a pail of sap, or he will see one on the trunk of a maple tree, sucking sweet from a crevice from which oozes sap, that is frozen at night and turned into honey-like syrup.

The honey-bee always finds the first pussy-willow from which she takes pollen and the

first spring wild flowers. Her keen sense of smell probably takes her far afield in the early spring before flowering has really begun. The lilac, and all the cultivated flowers she spies out, but it is not until the new grass is a few inches high, and the heads of the white clover appear that the honey flow can be said to have begun.

From then on, the honey-bee is a free-booter. All the floral world is hers, and she claims her own wherever she finds it. Disturb this robber and sacker of your orchards and fields if you dare. She will defend her right to all trees, shrubs and plants that bloom and you will not long dispute titles with her.

If the honey-bee could only gather honey from the red clover! This is the bee-keeper's zenith of hope, but the long heads of the red clover, which contain much more of the delicious sweet than do the shorter heads of the white, are not for the honey-bee. Nature has made her with too short a tongue to reach this treasure, so the bumble-bee and the butterfly

feed on it, while their more useful cousin goes unfed.

On about every head of every stalk in the buckwheat field you can see one of these golden-banded robbers. Away in the deep woods in the creamy flowers of the basswood, they are humming and tonguing the stamens for the hidden sweet. All through the summer days, and well into the autumn, the goldenrod will pay toll to the hive. No roadside flower that contains sweet is too mean or insignificant to escape the notice of this industrious honey-getter. While men idle she works, taught by some marvelous intuition that soon the flowers will fade, and snow cover the ground and that if the honey-bees would not perish like the bumble-bee, they must be storing up food for winter.

A great many erroneous ideas are held by the general public as to the position of the queen-bee in the colony. In the minds of many she is the master mind, and a queen of absolute power. But this is not so, while she is a royal queen, and her kingdom is a

veritable empire in which, in a certain sense, she is supreme, yet it is a limited monarchy, and her powers are more like those of a limited monarch than those of a despot.

The colony would even go so far as to kill their queen if they didn't like her, or thought she was not serving the best interests of the hive, quite as the human family have disposed of royalty that had become obnoxious.

Although the hive can do almost nothing without the presence and assistance of the queen, yet she is not its whole power. This is located in the body politic, just as it is in a limited monarchy.

In many ways the hive can be controlled through its queen. For instance, if the hive swarms, and a part of its members leave and take up quarters on the limb of an adjacent tree, they ascertain if the queen has come with them, and if she is not discovered in the cluster, they at once return to the hive. So when the bee-keeper does not wish to have the hive swarm, he keeps what is called a drone-trap over the front door of the hive. This enables

the workers to go and come as they wish but the queen and drones cannot leave the hive until the trap is removed.

Swarming is a wise provision of nature by means of which the hive is kept from becoming congested, and it is an unwritten law in beedom that the queen goes with the swarming bees. This leaves the old hive without a queen and consequently without means of keeping its numbers good, for you must remember that the life of a bee is only about sixty days, so if a hive is left for any length of time without a queen to lay eggs and hatch out new members, the entire colony dies, and the bee-keeper loses a hive. But this rarely happens, for these little people are very ingenious. Much more so than man, in fact, and can supply any existing want in their small but most active house.

When the old hive is left without a queen and none is ready to hatch, the colony may set to work and make a queen to order, as you might say.

In our human government we have often

created new royal families, but we have never actually created new queens, as the bees have done.

Several queen cells containing eggs, that have previously been laid by the absconding queen, are now sealed up and allowed to hatch, and the first new queen hatched crawls forth to receive the homage of her subjects which is hers in full measure once she has mated. But she at once takes a precaution against usurpers that our human royalty have often employed, for she kills all the unhatched or partially developed queens and thus insures her sovereignty.

This act done, her admiring subjects crowd around her and do homage, feeding her prepared food from their small tongues, and looking for all the world, as they cluster about her, like a large daisy, with its golden queenly centre.

It is a time of perturbation when the new queen flies forth to mate. She is at once missed and clouds of bees pour forth from the hive in search of her. This confusion often

alarms the novice into thinking that the hive is about to swarm.

But the mating queen cares not for the alarm of her subjects, she has more important business on hand this morning.

Up, up she soars in a graceful spiral, searching the upper air for her mate. As every hive contains several hundred drones who were hatched for this express purpose and for this alone, the queen is usually successful the first morning of her quest.

In the one-hundredth part of a second, while flying like bullets, the virgin queen and her mate make possible the laying of from five hundred to seven hundred thousand fertile eggs which may produce in time two or three dozen new hives of honey gatherers.

But the poor drone forfeits his life in the act. His generative organs are torn from his body and carried back by the queen to the hive, while the drone flutters to earth and dies having served his end in the economy of nature.

After the mating season is past the drones

are either driven from the hive, or killed, so that it shall contain only the queen and her workers.

Each hive of bees that is carrying its full complement of individuals contains the following:

First and foremost there is the queen, the gentle ruler of this wonderful kingdom, capable of laying from two to three thousand eggs a day in the laying season, and upon whose fertility the life of the hive depends. But she is not the only egg layer in the hive, for the workers are females as well, some of them capable of laying eggs, but the great difference between the eggs of these two egg-layers is that the queen's eggs may hatch queens, workers or drones, while the eggs of the worker will only hatch drones.

The drones are of course the males, whose only excuse for living is to fertilize the queen.

They never gather honey, and feed greedily at the store inside the hive. But their day is only a short one, although they live upon the

sweets of the land, without having to toil for it while they exist.

Briefly considered the inner life of the hive is as follows:

All through the cold months, from late in November up to nearly the first of May the hive is dormant. During this time its members, which are now all workers, hang in a large conical cluster in the hive. But there is a constant movement of the individuals in the cluster, which keeps it warm.

From time to time they feed upon the honey that has been stored up for that purpose, but they are not as hungry as they would be if more active. If the winter supply of honey runs low, the bee-keeper feeds them upon sugar melted to a thin syrup.

On an exceptionally warm day in April the swarm begins to warm up, and as soon as any of the earliest wild flowers blossom the bees are on hand to take toll.

So it will be seen they are no laggards and they tread very close upon the heels of the tardy spring.

I do not think any one knows just the chemistry of wax making. It, of course, comes from plants and flowers, but just what ones, and just how it is prepared only the reticent bee knows.

As soon as the honey flow begins in the spring the colony set to work to draw out the cells in which to store the golden nectar. Soon in each of the little sections which are made to hold a pound of honey, a wax curtain is started beginning at the top and working down. On each side of this curtain are plainly stamped the hexagonal cells which, when they have been drawn out laterally, will be the fully developed cells. It is a marvel of workmanship this golden cellular mass, each cell symmetrical and nicely sealed. But each honey gatherer has a tri-square on the end of his nose, his proboscis being triangular, and six of these triangles placed side by side, and point to point give him the perfect hexagon. This cell when completed is about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter and about three-quarters of an inch deep.

It is a wonderful sight to peep into the observation hive when the honey flow is at its height, and see these thousands and tens of thousands of industrious little folks coming and going, swarming in and out from the partly filled cells, each upon his mission of good to man.

Upon particularly hot days if you put your hand close to the hive you can sometimes feel a cold current of air not strong but very perceptible.

Inside a hundred cold air fans are going, keeping the temperature of the hive at a normal pitch and also thickening the honey. This is done by the wings which will fan away ceaselessly for hours.

The hive is always kept scrupulously clean, for the honey-makers appreciate the fact that any foreign substance would taint the honey.

Each spring the hive is carefully cleaned and all small cracks are sealed up with wax, so that it is as nearly impervious to moisture and dust as possible.

Sometimes when the honey flow is heavy

the bee-keeper places a hive upon the scales, and it occasionally registers five or six pounds in a single day, but this is much above the average.

There are many kinds of honey, varying according to the flora of the vicinity in which the bees are kept. Goldenrod, basswood, white clover and buckwheat are among the best known. Alfalfa is also a great honey plant, and the flow from this source is great and bee-keeping in the alfalfa country is most lucrative.

There is no subject in the entire range of natural history more fascinating than that of bee study with the possible exception of the ants, who are about as much of a mystery to man as are the bees.

It is a biting satire upon the wisdom and ingenuity of men, that long before God placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden the bees and the ants had perfected man's two principal forms of government, upon which he is still laboring, namely, the kingdom and the republic.

One cannot study either the ant-hill or the beehive for long and keep his conceit and self-confidence, as the particular capstone of creation, and the impersonation of all wisdom.

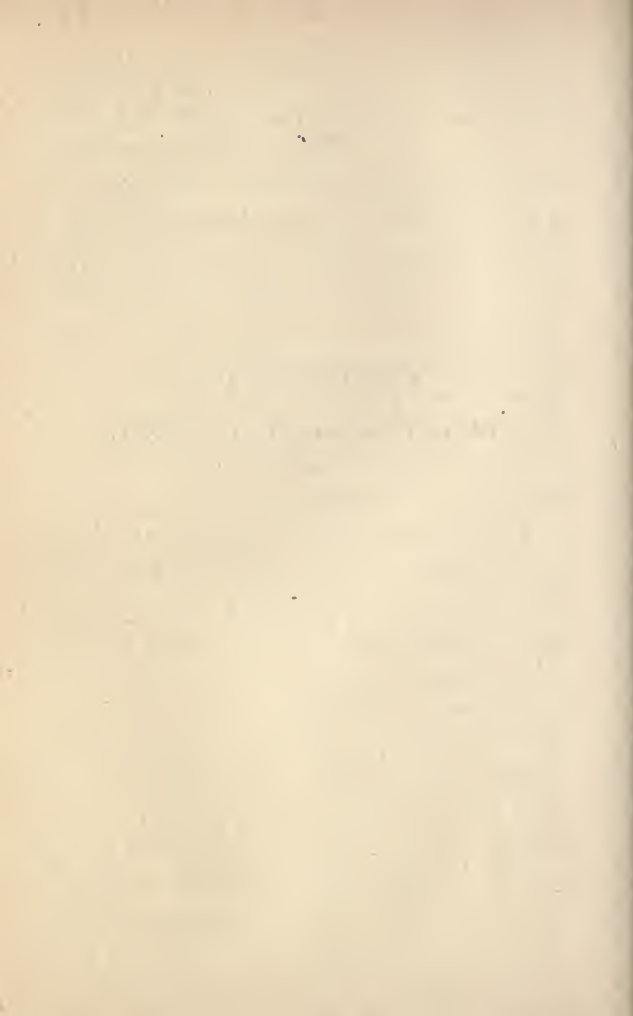
Who taught the bees the art of government, which they possess to such a marked degree? Who gave them their moral code, and their nice distinction between the fit and the unfit? Who told them that the heart of the rose and the lily were sweet, and that the sweet could be gathered upon that subtle tongue? Who taught them to predigest this food and to prepare it so nicely for man? How and where did they learn that half of the year was biting cold and that the flowers were all asleep for many months? Who told them that they must provide for this lapse in the bounty of nature?

What governs the instinct of swarming? Which are the master minds who lead the way to the new bee tree? Where in that small brain is located the sense of direction, that will lead the little wanderers as straight home as a shaft of light would travel? Why do not

the bees who stay in the hive swarm, and those who swarm stay at home?

These and a thousand others are the queries that daily and hourly confront the keeper of bees, and he has never yet satisfactorily answered any of them.

CHAPTER VI
DOWNSTREAM IN A CANOE



CHAPTER VI

Downstream in a Canoe

ALL my life I had dreamed of the wilderness beyond the pale of civilization, the home of the bear and the moose, the deer and the beaver, and wondered vainly if I would ever be fortunate enough to visit this wonderland, the "Big Woods."

The little brook in the meadow my fancy had transformed into a wonderful stream in the Maine woods, and going for the cows had been translated into "moose calling" by the same magic.

But now my dreams had all come true. I no longer had to play that the meadow brook was a wilderness stream, for such a river was at the very moment slipping beneath the keel of our canoe, and as for moose calling, why the guide the evening before had fashioned a birch bark horn that he said would

call all the bull moose in the State of Maine right into our very camp.

It was twilight of a wonderful day, late in October. The funeral pyres of leaf and frond blazed high upon the hilltops, and glowed with rich deep red, low down in the quiet valley. Along all the smaller watercourses the sumac and soft maple glowed, while the bright berries of the mountain ash occasionally showed among the duller reds.

A little later all this brilliant color would fade. The leaves would first turn to yellows and browns, then to grays, and finally they would return to dust, making way for the new buds.

All day long we had been drifting down the swift current of a wonderful stream in northern Maine. Perhaps this stream was no more wonderful than a thousand others throughout the world, but it seemed wonderful to me, for I was going with it on its impetuous errand, and I fell into all its moods. When it ran swift and turbulent, my own blood pulsed more freely. When it was deep

and placid, my own mood became contemplative. How often I thought, during that cruise, of the passage of the "living waters." It seemed to me that all waters that foamed and gleamed, bubbled and gurgled, roared and leapt, were living.

That noon we had stopped at the mouth of a stream, clear as crystal, and as cold as ice. I knew the moment I saw this pure little brook that it contained trout. The trout is in some ways a very particular fish, and he is especially fussy about his abode.

A trout cannot tolerate muddy, sluggish water. The brook that he inhabits must leap and sparkle. The trout is a leaping, sparkling fish, and his stream must match his own character. There must be no moss on the stones in his brook, and no frog spittle.

So the little brook being limpid and pure had provided our dinner in the form of a dozen handsome trout. After the fish were dressed, a thin strip of pork had been put inside each, and then they had been put in the ashes.

There were only two occupants of the light canoe that felt the slightest stroke of the paddle so quickly. That day, two was company, and I am afraid that three would have been a crowd. The guide merely watched the current and the nose of the canoe, occasionally dipping the paddle into the water to steady her, or to change her course. In long stretches of quiet, deep water, he was obliged to paddle, but for most of the way, Nature was working for us, and that mystic something that was calling to the waters was speeding our canoe swiftly downstream.

There were plenty of sights and sounds in this Maine wilderness to keep one watching and guessing. Little birds peeped curiously at us from the thickets, and many an empty nest, that had been cunningly hidden months before, now showed plainly as the green mantle that had shielded it became more transparent. The great fish-hawk occasionally soared majestically by, or stooped to the stream and picked up a chub, almost under our noses. The kingfisher rattled and chat-

tered and clattered, whenever we came upon him, and made it quite plain to us that we had invaded his domain. The bittern uttered his strange cry, and then flopped slowly away. Crows screamed at us from the treetops, and the jay squalled derisively, and then flew away to tell all the dwellers in the forest that a strange fish was swimming the stream, and that the fearful creature, man, had something to do with it, so the whole affair was to be shunned.

That noisy, gleeful imp, the red squirrel, also scolded and barked, whenever we went ashore, and he did not always let us pass unchallenged, when we kept to the water. Trout leaped in the deep pools at dusk and dawn, and we always sought to take some for breakfast or supper. But there were other fishermen besides ourselves. Besides the kingfisher and the fish-hawk, the otter and the mink also took fish, while Bruin, clumsy as he seems, makes many a good meal upon trout.

We held the canoe anchored to the shore,

by some bushes, for an hour one twilight, while we watched Bruin fishing. He took his fish just as a raccoon would, crouching above the pool, with his paw in readiness, until some luckless trout swam to the surface for a fly or miller. The stroke was so quick that we did not see it, but we did see the trout that went spinning into the bushes, and we also saw the "smile" on the bear's face, as he lumbered off with his prize. The guide told me that many of the big cats also fish in the same manner.

CHAPTER VII

JACKING AND MOOSE-CALLING



CHAPTER VII

Jacking and Moose-calling

THERE is a strange fascination to most wild animals in the gleam of firelight, especially at night. Nearly all of them fear the bright mysterious something, that leaps and dances, flickers and fades so magically.

Most wild creatures are of two minds, half fearful and half fascinated, and love to linger on the outskirts of the light, where they can see and not be seen.

Probably the instinctive fear of fire that wild animals have springs from their sad experiences with forest fires. It is no wonder that they fear this power which they cannot understand, this demon that will, in a few fearful hours, lay waste their deep fastnesses, turning cool sweet shade into an inferno, and the sweet air into a stifling, choking, strangling nightmare, from which so many of them

find it impossible to escape. No sight is more majestic or terrible than that of a forest fire, especially when the winds fan the flames, which leap from treetop to treetop, crowning the forest with a wreath of brass, while its denizens flee to lakes and streams for shelter, some going slowly, but others on the wings of the wind.

The part that fire has played in the relations of man and beast is most important. Many an unfortunate traveller has defended himself effectually from wolves, with a few bright flames, when powder and ball have failed.

One evening after supper, we lighted our jack, and pushed off in a canoe to try what magic there was in fire.

The night was wonderfully still, just as it frequently is in autumn, when the constellations are bright, and the Hunter's Moon is at its full. There were plenty of night sounds, such as the unearthly laughing of a loon, or the hooting of an owl, but when the wilderness had again lapsed into silence, it seemed

even stiller for the night voices that had spoken.

For half an hour, we drifted silently downstream seeing and hearing small creatures that were attracted by our jack. Presently there was a slight sound in the underbrush, which seemed to keep just so far from the stream, and to be following parallel with our course. Once, when a dry twig snapped with a sharp report, the guide whispered, "deer." A twig never crunches under the sharp, cutting hoof of a deer, but always pops. After the sounds in the bushes had followed parallel to the stream for a few rods, they became plainer, as though the forest stranger was overcoming his timidity, or getting more curious about us. Just ahead was a sharp turn in the stream, and a point that ran out into the water. Here the guide worked the boat carefully in towards the shore, where he held it stationary, by thrusting a paddle into the sand. There we waited and listened, my nerves tingling with excitement. Then presently the sounds of breaking twigs, and the swish of parting

bushes drew nearer, and a dark form crossed a patch of moonlight about fifty feet away. A second later it came out into the outer edge of light cast by the jack, and stood erect and alert. There was no mistaking that proud figure, with its graceful outline, and slim, arching neck, even if there had not been a magnificent crown of horns, probably a five pointer, and two large luminous eyes, that were wide with fear and wonder. A moment later a second head was thrust into the aureole of light, and a doe, also wide-eyed and wondering, stood beside her lord, and gazed fearfully, yet fascinated at this strange will-o'-the-wisp, that danced on the river. It was as pretty a wilderness picture as ever delighted the eye of woodsman, but it was all too brief, for a telltale breath of wind came dancing over the stream and blew our hot body scent full in their distended, quivering nostrils. There was a loud snort, a whistle, and the pair went crashing through the woods, just as though it had been daylight instead of semi-darkness, and the path had been smooth,



IT WAS AS PRETTY A WILDERNESS PICTURE AS EVER
DELIGHTED THE EYES OF A WOODSMAN



instead of laid with a score of pitfalls and every step filled with neckbreaking obstacles.

We had had our fun for that night, so paddled leisurely back to camp, well pleased with the experience.

Another allurement that we tried, which was equally interesting, was moose-calling. For this, my companion first made a moose call. This was done by stripping a yellow birch of a section of its bark, about three feet long, which was rolled into a rude megaphone.

This call was also used on a moonlight night, when the witchery of the Hunter's Moon was on the forest, and we went in the canoe, as before. This is a favorite manner of stalking game, as one can go so much stiller than on foot. It must not be imagined that we had any response to our entreaties the first night or the second. In fact, it was nearly a week before our patience was rewarded.

We were lying in a little cove, which was an arm of a wonderful forest lake. The canoe was held stationary by a paddle that

was thrust in the mud. My companion rested the larger end of the moose call on the bow of the canoe, took a deep breath, puffed out his cheek like the unfortunate man who plays the bass tuba in the band, and a deep chested bellow echoed across the lake. First, it was low keyed and uncertain, like the rumble of distant thunder, but as the sound rose in pitch it swelled in volume, filling the forest and echoing along the lake. Finally, it died away in an uncertain wail, like the bellow of a cow who is calling for the calf that the man in the blue frock has just loaded into the wagon and driven away with.

We waited and listened, but only the cries of night birds reached our ears. Again the guide flung this deep chested bellow, that I do not see how human lungs can produce, across the lake, and we waited and listened. This time it was answered, faint and far, but still it was an answering call, and that was more than we had heard before.

Again the guide called, this time putting more of defiance than of entreaty into the

sound. This, too, was answered, and the answering call was defiant as well. Then there was silence for two or three minutes, while we waited for our rival to make the next move. Soon we were rewarded for our patience by a third call, this time much plainer.

“He’s coming round the lake,” whispered the guide, and he sent back a defiant bellow. Then there was silence again while the night winds sighed in the treetops, and the ripples on the water softly licked the sides of the canoe, and murmured on the pebbly beach.

In the course of five minutes, we could hear him coming, thrashing the bushes with his antlers, and occasionally stopping as though uncertain.

Each time his thundering challenge rolled across the lake we responded with an equally defiant bellow. At last we could hear him thrashing the bushes with his antlers, and the guide reached over with a paddle and thrashed with the paddle upon some bushes that grew along the shore. Then he blew a short, defiant bellow, that plainly said, “Come

on, my fine fellow, and I will give you a terrible thrashing."

This was more than the uncertain bull could stand. He had been challenged, his courage had been questioned, his reputation was at stake, so with a short bellow of rage, and a snort of defiance, he tore through the underbrush, bending down small saplings as he came.

We could now plainly hear his hoofs clack, as he came, like huge castanets. Then he burst out into the open, his head erect, his nostrils distended, his eyes blazing, his whole attitude belligerent.

He was a magnificent picture as he stood there in the full moonlight, clearly outlined against the forest. The broad spread of his antlers, his massive head, his deep chest, and his great height, all proclaimed him a king. The rightful king of the forest whose denizens should honor and whom man should admire as one of God's splendid creatures.

Whether he would have come still nearer and finally either scented or actually seen

us, I do not know. These striking scenes in the woods are usually fleeting, seen for a few seconds and then they vanish and leave one wondering whether his senses have not played him false after all. He had not stood in full view five seconds when the telltale, warning cry of a loon echoed across the lake and with a snort of alarm he thundered into the depths from which he came and we saw him no more, although we could hear his noisy progress through the deep woods for several minutes. When the last sound of breaking underbrush had ceased we paddled back to camp, well pleased with the night's moose calling.



CHAPTER VIII
IN BEAVER-LAND

CHAPTER VIII

In Beaver-Land

ONE afternoon, when the splendor of the autumnal forest had begun to pale, and grays and browns had partially taken the place of saffron and gold and flaming red, we floated down into the pleasant valley that I call beaver-land.

For three or four miles above the first of the chain of five lakes, there were plenty of signs that beaver dwelt not far distant. The first intimation that we had of being near the colony, was the stumps of hundreds of poplars and maples. These stumps were conical in shape and where the tree had not yet quite succumbed to these active rodents, it was shaped like an hour-glass. The largest of

these trees were two or two and a half feet in diameter, but the guide told me that he had occasionally seen trees three or four feet in diameter that had fallen beneath the teeth of these ambitious woodsmen.

Further on down the valley we occasionally saw a log that had lodged against some root or projection in the bank. This log was on its way to the dam perhaps, where it would be worked into that structure, or maybe it was intended for food and would be stored under the ice, for use during the long winter.

As we drifted further and further into beaver-land, the wonder of it all grew upon me. It did not seem so wonderful that a beaver should fell one tree, or half a dozen, but when I saw acres of timber nearly stripped by these wonderful animals my respect for all four-footed creatures grew.

The five lakes that comprised beaver-land were like a series of locks in a canal, each lake setting back to the dam of the one above. My companion told me that beaver dams were usually in pairs one above the other. He

said it was hard to tell why the beaver built in this way, but his own theory was that the wise builder kept the upper lake as a reservoir, for he always built his house in the lower lake, with this second lake at his command, if the first dam sprung a-leak and the water fell so as to expose the beaver houses to attack, the beaver could repair the leak in the dam, and immediately fill the lower lake from the upper, without waiting for it to fill in the natural way. If this is the real secret for these double lakes, it looks very much as though the beavers were capable of planning on their own account. When we saw cords and cords of poplar and maple wood, cut into pieces about three feet in length piled up in front of each dam, we were again forced to believe that the beaver is a planner.

Some of the beaver houses which were old were so overgrown with water grasses that they looked like small hillocks in the lake, while others were smooth and symmetrical, as though they were fresh from the mason's trowel. Another thing that looked much as

though the beaver could plan for himself, were certain breakwaters running out into the stream above the upper lake. They were alternated, and the guide said they were to break the force of the ice during the high water in springtime and to keep it from rushing down upon the dams and demolishing them. Another clever piece of work in beaver-land is a channel that is sometimes cut around the end of a dam, so that the water may flow off in a waste-water, and not wash the dam by its continual flow.

The beavers caused us four hard portages around their dams that day, but by twilight we camped upon the lower of the five lakes close to the dam. The same evening after we had eaten our supper of broiled fish, biscuit and coffee, we drew our canoe up on the bank of the lake and prepared to watch the operation of dam building, which, from the newly cut logs and fresh mud that we saw upon the dam, we knew was going on.

We tried the old ruse of displacing some logs and sods, in hopes that the little builders

would discover the leak and come forth to repair the damage. I felt quite mean when I saw the rent that we had made in the structure, and was half inclined to repair the damage myself and trust to luck to see the beavers at work, but I was most desirous of seeing the little builders on the spot and so suffered the water to stream through the break.

We took a commanding position in a tall pine near the dam from which we could see far up the lake and across the low lying valley in every direction. It was rather tedious waiting, holding on to an uncertain perch forty or fifty feet up in the pine. We soon got cramped and stiff, but the game for which we were out was an exciting one, and our anticipation helped while away the two solid hours that passed before we saw much that interested us.

How still it was between the night cries that came to our ears from the distant forest. There was always the low gurgling glee of the water as it slipped through the hole that we had made in the dam, but when the hooting

of an owl or the barking of a fox had died away and we had only the soft sighing of the wind in the pines, and the murmur of the water, the wilderness seemed like some enchanted land upon which there had been laid a spell of silence, deep and abiding.

The heavens were so studded with stars that it seemed as though there was not room for another, while the milky-way glowed white and luminous. The Hunter's Moon was at its full and flooded the distant vistas of the forest with a light almost as bright as day. Every star in heaven and the great luminous moon were reflected in the lake, which shimmered and sparkled almost phosphorescently. It was a scene to make one draw long deep breaths, and the pulse to beat fast and strong.

Some distance upstream, probably a mile away, we heard a tree fall with a thundering crash, which echoed across the lake again and again. From the sound we knew that a tree not less than two feet had been laid low.

We had concluded that the energies of the

colony were all employed in tree cutting for that night and were about to descend, when we noticed several short logs floating down towards the dam; they seemed to be floating much faster than the current would naturally carry them and we were at first unable to account for it, but when the logs got nearer to the dam we made out the dark head of a beaver floating behind each log and the rapidity with which the logs had floated was explained. Each was being pushed by an energetic log driver.

When within about a hundred feet of the dam the beavers evidently discovered the damage that we had done, for they left their logs and swam hurriedly to the break. One climbed into the crevasse and tried to pull the ends of projecting sticks together. All seemed much excited, for they swam to and fro, now disappearing under the water, as though they had dove to the bottom to see how far down the break extended, and then reappearing in the break. We thought we counted half a dozen, but they disappeared so

suddenly and reappeared in such unexpected places that we were not sure of their number.

Finally all swam away upstream where they were gone about twenty minutes. But they soon returned pushing alder and willow bushes before them in the water. These they stuck into the foundation of the dam, filling the gap with a row of stakes or pickets. So far they had set to work just as a farmer would mend a brush fence. Then they went away upstream again and reappeared in about the same time that they had before. This time they brought more brush, which they wove between the stakes, laterally. This was evidently the backbone, for they soon brought sods, which they floated in the water just as they had the sticks, and laid them in front of the brush fence that they had already built. The current carried the sods into all the crevasses and the flow of water was lessened but it was not until they had carried sods and mud for an hour that the break was entirely filled. In a day or two when the mud and sod

had dried, the repairs on the dam would not be noticed.

Several times that night we heard the crash of falling trees and as stray logs occasionally floated down and lodged against the dam, we concluded that quite a gang were engaged in wood-cutting further up the lake.

After we had descended the old pine and returned to camp, the guide told me many interesting things about the beaver.

The beaver seems to be a very social fellow, living in communities. His family life also seems to be very pleasant, for sometimes there will be fifteen or even twenty beavers living in the very largest lodges.

A family always comprises the old beavers, the babies, the yearlings, and the two year olds, but when they reach that age they are shoved out into the world to make room for the new babies. But this home-leaving is probably no hardship for them, for the mating instinct is by that time asserting itself, and they seek out mates and make homes for themselves.

The dam building instinct of the beaver is one of the most remarkable instincts in the animal kingdom.

It enables its possessors to build dams of wonderful symmetry and size; structures that it would seem impossible for such small creatures to build.

The beaver's dam is built for protection, to make a little Venice where he shall be secure from his enemies. Just as the feudal lords of old surrounded their castles with moats, he surrounds his lodge with a broad lake, so that his enemies cannot get at him as easily as they otherwise would. The entrance to his house is always under water, and to protect himself against low water, which would sometimes be felt in a stream, he dams the stream, and thus makes sure of keeping the water above his underground passage. The lake also serves as a place of storage for the beaver's great supply of wood, which is his food in winter. If it were not for his dam, the wood would probably be swept downstream, and the beaver, who is locked under

the ice in winter, would have to go hungry.

In France the beavers are nearly all bank beavers, and do not build houses. Probably, because the streams are deep and sluggish, and the water is of a uniform depth for the entire year, but in America nearly all the beavers are house-builders. Once in a while a bank beaver is found in this country. He makes his home in a burrow in the bank, as the otter does, but his life is not as well ordered as that of the house beaver.

The wood-cutting habit of the beaver is as remarkable as his dam-building instinct. When we see trees three or four feet in diameter laid low, by these industrious rodents, we cannot deny that they have patience, and pluck.

In cutting down trees the beaver stands upon his hind legs, balancing himself on his broad flat tail, and nips a girdle about the tree. He then cuts another girdle above the first, and pulls out the chip between. This process is repeated until the forest monarch

falls. Usually, however, they confine themselves to trees a foot or less in diameter, as these logs are more easily handled, both in dam building and as food.

“As busy as a beaver” is a proverb, but like many another proverb, it is only partly true. For two or three months in the year the beaver is a very busy fellow, but the rest of the year, he is one of the laziest inhabitants of woods and waters. All through the winter, from the time that the first thick ice locks him under the water, until it breaks up in the spring, he sleeps in his lodge. When hungry he nibbles away at his store of bark and if he wants exercise he goes for a swim in the lake to keep up his muscle. Then when the spring rains unlock the ice door above him, and he is free again, the male beaver who is over three years of age, goes on his annual pilgrimage, through lakes and streams.

He does not care much where he goes, as long as he can find plenty of water with timber or brush near by.

All through the summer months he wan-

ders, living a day or a week in a place, as the humor seizes him.

When the first frost touches the soft maples along the waterways, he turns his nose homeward.

Meanwhile the female beavers have been rearing the young, and looking after the yearlings and the two year olds.

Once the males return to the colony the scene changes and from being an indolent happy-go-lucky community it becomes a village of industry, for the dam must be repaired and all the mud houses made ready for winter. There is also the winter supply of bark to cut, and in a large colony this means cords.

Then on starlight nights when the moon is at its full, and the autumn wind whispers in the treetops, you will hear the trees falling with a crash, that echoes away and away through the silent forest, and across the peaceful beaver lake.

Then you will see hundreds and probably thousands of small logs about three feet in

length, floating downstream to the lake. The beaver has the same provident instinct as the bee, who prods the white clover and the goldenrod, bringing home their sweets, and storing it up against the time of dearth. Does this not look as though there was a calendar in the animal and insect world?

What is more picturesque or pleasing in the many happy surprises of the wilderness than a beaver dam, holding in its strong arm a beautiful woodland lake?

It does not look like a thing that was made by hands, or teeth or feet either, for that matter, but just as though it grew here, and was a part of nature. The ends of the logs are so ragged, and the whole structure is so overgrown with lichens and moss, and perhaps willows or alders that it seems part and parcel of nature's handiwork.

But as you fall to studying it and see how well it was placed, how that great boulder was made to brace the dam in the middle of the stream, or a tree made to hold one end, or how the natural features of the landscape

were made to serve the beaver's ends, you wonder at his cunning and his marvelous builder's instinct. Then when you see his device for keeping the water from wearing the dam by constant overflow, which is nothing more or less than a waste-water dug about one end of the dam, you are still more deeply impressed with his sagacity.

The beaver might have learned his house-building habit of the Indian, or perhaps the Adobe house builders, so closely has he followed their plan. But he is wiser than they, for his front door is always locked.

How can we deny the wonder and the mystery of this life in the beaver colony? The village with its sages and wise men, the household with its heads and its babes and youngsters, the strong wall or bulwark built about the city for the mutual protection of all. The supplies that have been stored up against the time of dearth and the ingenious mind or instinct, if you like the word better, that meets and overcomes all these adverse conditions?

This is the true test of man or beast, whether it be in the wilderness or the city, to meet and overcome adverse conditions and to make the desert bloom like the rose.

CHAPTER IX
ONE'S OWN BACK DOOR-YARD

CHAPTER IX

One's Own Back Door-yard

IT was about ten o'clock of as dismal a Saturday morning as ever spoiled a boy's fun by raining.

Old Ben and I had planned a fishing trip that would have been memorable among all the good times we had enjoyed together, but it had rained so hard that my mother had vetoed our going.

The lunch basket was packed, the bait dug, and everything was in readiness except the weather.

But how it did rain! Great gusts of wind drove the rain before it in blinding sheets, and small rivulets ran in the road, and in the walk.

If it had only been just a drizzle we would not have minded. The fishing would have

been all the better, but this deluge put all thoughts of our long planned trip out of mind.

I sat on the back porch bewailing my hard luck and watching the downpour. There was some satisfaction in that, even if the storm had spoiled my fun.

It was a regular duck's day, and no mistake. No creature that was not oiled from head to foot could stand such a drenching as this.

If I had been a girl, I might have had the consolation of crying, but as I was a boy and expected to celebrate my eleventh birthday soon, even that comfort was denied me.

Presently a tall, dark figure loomed up through the mist, coming down the pathway leading across the mowing at the back of the house. At first I thought I was mistaken, for sometimes I could see it, and then a violent gust of wind and rain would blot it out, but soon it drew nearer, and I made out old Ben, coming at his accustomed long stride. In another minute he was hurrying up the

steps of the back porch, the rain fairly streaming down his long rubber coat.

He was laughing and chuckling and looked the very picture of merriment.

"Isn't it an awful shame, Ben?" I began. "This nasty old rain has spoiled all our fun, and now we can't take the trip to the pond."

"Fiddlesticks, boy. Yes, we can. Why, I expect to go next Saturday. You needn't go along unless you want to, but I propose to go."

"I almost know it will rain and be another horrid day just like this one," I said. "Isn't it an awful shame that it rains to-day, Ben?"

"Well, no, Harry, I can't positively say that it is, if you want me to tell the 'honest-Injun-truth.' You see there are a great many people in the world and it is awful hard for God to suit them all at the same time. The poor farmers, who raise all the good things for us to eat, have been wishing for rain for weeks. Everything was gettin' shriveled up; crops were all spilin'. If this state of affairs had kept up much longer why we

wouldn't had any crops at all. All the trees and flowers looked pathetic and droopin', just as though they had lost their best friend, and really they had.

"So you see there are lots of people and things to consider. Maybe, this morning, when the sun came up, God saw how shriveled things were, and how discouraged the farmers all looked, and He said to Himself, 'I guess I had better have a rain to-day; a good hard one, and see if it won't freshen things up a bit.' Then maybe He said, 'There are old Ben and Harry, they want to go to the pond fishing to-day. Now, if it rains, they can't go. What shall I do?'

"Don't you see, Harry, that there were hundreds and hundreds of farmers who wanted it to rain and only you and I who didn't, so God would have to suit the greater number."

Ben's queer picture of God trying to suit all the people at once made me smile, even though I was greatly disappointed. He always had such a bright way of looking at

things. No matter how bad a thing was, old Ben could always find some good way of explaining it, and of getting sunshine out of it.

"You are a funny fellow to always make things look good when they are really bad," I said. "How do you think all these queer thoughts?"

"Well, boy," said the old man, patting me affectionately on the head, "it is this way. I have lived a long time compared with you, and a man can't spend seventy years in this beautiful old world without doing a pile of thinking.

"It seems to me the more I consider how wonderfully the world is made, how all the plants and animals are fed, and protected, and how even the smallest things are made as carefully as though they had been mountains, when I get to thinking about these things it makes me feel that there is a wise and wonderful power behind all. So I know that all rainy days must be good and the very best thing in their place. Now, I will take off my coat and we will set right down here on the

old back porch and have the finest kind of a time seeing things.”

“Seeing things!” I gasped in astonishment. Then the funny side of the proposition came over me and I laughed aloud.

“I know you are a great fellow to see things, Ben,” I said at last, “but what can we see from here? Are you joking?”

“It is no joke at all, Harry,” replied my friend seriously, “I mean every word of it. We will have a fine time seeing things. I never yet got tucked into any corner in the world where I could not see something mighty interesting.

“Now, Harry,” he continued, seating himself in an old wooden-bottomed chair, and tilting it back against the wall for comfort, “our field of observation is the back porch and just a few feet outside. Now, what do you make of it?”

“A wet slippery floor, some morning-glory vines, and, that’s all, just a horrid place,” I answered, “but it isn’t quite as bad as it was before you came, Ben.”

"Guess your woodsman's specks are rather dim this morning," replied Ben with a merry twinkle in his eye. "Perhaps it has rained on them. Guess you will have to rub them up, boy. Try again; I can see lots of interesting things besides those you have mentioned. All you have seen is just the frame to the picture. What a sorry world this would be if people looked only at the frames, and let all its beautiful pictures go unnoticed!"

I looked carefully up and down the floor boards, peering into all the cracks, while old Ben tried to look away and keep from laughing.

Finally I gave it up, and returned to my first assertion that it was a dull, stupid place with nothing interesting in it.

Ben laughed. "Well, Harry, suppose I just set the ball to rolling. I can see a little creature that can make a morsel for you that will fairly make your mouth water. One of the most wonderful little things that God ever made. It and its kind know all the secrets of

the flowers, and the blossoms yield up their very sweetest nectar for them. Many of the flowers and trees could not bear fruit at all if it was not for them. They live in a kingdom and have a wonderful queen who lays over half a million eggs in her short life of a few years. Look at the honey-bee, Harry, just crawling out of that morning-glory trumpet. Now, there is a study for you; something that you might read about a whole lifetime and then not find out all there is to learn."

I looked at the particular trumpet indicated and saw a very ordinary honey-bee, with three golden bands running across her abdomen. She was just coming out of the trumpet and was shaking the wet from her wings.

"Probably got caught in there when the rain came up and so thought she would wait inside until it was over," said Ben. "A very wise decision. When it lets up a little, I presume she will go home."

"Where is her home?" I asked, for I had already become interested in this three-

banded rogue who made so free with the flowers.

“Perhaps it is a little white house, that stands in a row of little white houses, on bee street,” replied my friend, “or maybe it is a bee-tree two or three miles from here. But, in either case, she will not waste any time in getting home once she has started.

“When she fairly gets her bearings she will fly home as straight as an old crow will make for the rookery, and that has come to be a proverb.”

“How can she tell which way to go if she cannot see her home?” I asked. “She has no road to travel.”

“No, she does not do it that way,” replied Ben. “Many of the animals and birds, and even the small insects have a sense of direction, a kind of compass in their heads that will always tell them which is the way home. No matter how dark it is or how rough the way, this instinct never fails.

“If a man is lost in the woods or on the prairies, his horse knows the way home a

great deal better than he does, and if he is a wise man he will give his faithful steed the rein and let him take his master home.

“A dog never gets lost in the woods, and a cat can always find her way back to the old home when she has been moved. We humans don’t know it all, Harry, and in some ways we are inferior in wisdom to God’s lesser creatures.”

“What has the bee been doing in the morning-glory blossom?” I asked.

“She’s been after honey,” replied the old man. “The flowers all know her and love her too, I reckon, although she takes their very heart’s secret from them.

“This is the way she does it. She crawls away down into the trumpet until she gets where the honey is, then she licks it out with her little tongue, and puts it away in her honey stomach. That is a small stomach just in front of her real stomach. The sweet will stay in there until it is partly digested, and then it will be ready to put in the comb, that perhaps she made yesterday to hold the

honey. So all the honey that we get is partly digested, and that is why sick people can eat it."

"How many are there in the little white house?" I asked.

"That depends," replied Ben. "Perhaps there are fifty or seventy-five thousand, if it is a very large swarm, or maybe there are only ten or fifteen thousand. But there are as many bees in a hive as there are people in a good-sized city, so you see it is quite a family."

"What do they all do?" I asked.

"Different things," replied Ben. "The queen lays eggs and her duty is to keep laying eggs so that the hive shall keep up its numbers. You see, Harry, an ordinary bee lives only sixty or ninety days, so the queen must be diligent to keep their numbers good. In the autumn there are no bees left in the hive that were there in the spring, except the queen. They are all dead and new ones have taken their places.

"So the queen lays eggs. The workers

who are her daughters gather honey, and make combs in which to store it.

“The drones are the queen’s sons, and they do nothing but live on the honey that the daughters gather.

“But all the honey-bees do not live in the little white house. Many of them live in bee-trees in the deep woods, where they store up hundreds of pounds of honey. It is great fun to hunt for a bee-tree.”

“Let’s go some day, Ben,” I cried, all excitement.

“All right, boy, I intended to take you some time; but I guess we will not go to-day.

“Now that was pretty good for one morning-glory trumpet, Harry. Let’s see what else there is here on the old back porch.”

“This rotten plank is full of ants,” I said, rather indifferently.

“Good, boy, good,” cried Ben, slapping me on the shoulder. “Now you are getting your woodsman’s specks rubbed up a bit. Perhaps I shall make a woodsman of you after all.

"Well, ants are just about as wonderful as bees, only I don't love 'em as I do the bees, because they are not as useful, but they are mighty smart just the same.

"Did you ever imagine when you see a large ant-hill in the pasture that in that mound is a great republic like the United States?"

"No," I gasped in astonishment, "tell me about it."

"Well, long before God made man, He made bees and ants. Long before He set Adam and Eve in the garden and told them to be good, ants and bees were running kingdoms and republics.

"The ants not only have a government with a president, but they also have a standing army, and they fight battles with other ant-hills—have spies and scouts and real battles. They build roads and bridges, and move heavy obstacles that are in their way. They do things that, considering their size, would make the building of Brooklyn bridge by men seem like child's play.

"They are mighty funny little creatures. They can bite too. If you don't believe it just step on an ant-hill some time and let about a thousand of them run up your leg.

"Don't see anything else about the old porch, do you, Harry?" continued Ben.

I peeked into all the cracks and crannies, but could see nothing.

"I can see a mighty interesting old chap in the dirt just underneath the piazza," said Ben, pointing almost under my bare feet. "If he had been a bear he might have bitten you."

I strained my eyes but could see nothing.

"It is just one of nature's little tricks, boy," said Ben. "He is what is called protectively colored. That is, his clothes just match his surroundings."

He was lying partly buried in the dirt, and even when Ben pointed him out to me, I could not see him until we poked him with a stick, and made him disclose himself.

"He is a great hider, is Bufo, the hop-toad," continued Ben, "and a most useful

little creature. Some people used to think he had a precious jewel in his head, which, of course, is not so, but he is a precious jewel himself to the farmer, for he catches many injurious worms and bugs and helps to save the farmer's crops from destruction. We could not get along without him, for all he is an ugly looking fellow.

"His tongue is fastened at the other end from what yours is, Harry, so all he has to do when he sees a fly is to flick it out, and as his tongue is sticky, like fly paper, Mr. Fly is caught before he knows it.

"Bufo is quite a musician too. In the spring when the bullfrogs and the hylas are singing, you will hear him down by the pool. He puffs out his throat until you would think it must burst, and then sends forth a shrill tremulous note, that can be heard for a long distance.

"A family of toads under the front door-step is as good as a circus any evening."

"Where in the world did you learn all these things, Ben?" I asked in astonishment,

for it seemed to me that Ben could make a story of almost anything that crawled, crept, ran, or flew.

“Well, Harry,” he replied, “most of it I picked up. I have always kept my eyes open, which is a very necessary thing to do if one wants to see all that is going on in God’s busy world. I see things and then I think about them, that is necessary too. If a man or a boy will do this he can have a first-rate time even in his own back door-yard.”

CHAPTER X
A WARY MOTHER

CHAPTER X

A Wary Mother

It was fence-mending time in the country, and Ben and I were on our way to the pasture land to look after a half-mile of brush fence that ran through the deep pine and hemlock woods.

It was always a red letter day for me when old Ben came to the farm to work for my father.

Fence-mending time in New England is about the first of May, or perhaps a little earlier, if the farmer is forehanded; so, you see, it was just the time of year to see things in the deep woods, if one had the eyes to see them.

All the world seemed joyous this glorious May morning, and it made me glad just to hear the pleasant sounds about me.

The young stock were lowing, and the little lambs were frisking and bleating. The

pigeons were cooing, and the rooster was crowing as though he would split his throat, but his real object was to crow so loud that his rival could hear him a quarter of a mile away.

The birds were all busy flying to and fro with the most important air, as it was nest building time.

Really there was some excuse for their seeming importance. Most of the human family build a new house once in a lifetime, but many of the birds build a new one each spring.

Just as old Ben and I got over the stone wall in the pasture, we heard a cock partridge drumming, which is always an interesting sound in the spring, for then it means something.

“I know that old fellow,” said Ben. “His drumming log isn’t very far from the fence; perhaps we will get a glimpse of him. He is a very old cock and I have seen him drumming several times. I know he is old because the feathers on his legs grow down very low.

In fact, he almost looks as though he had on pantalets and you never see any but an old bird with feathers like that."

When we got within about ten rods of the drumming log we crept forward carefully, Ben leading the way and only going forward while the cock was drumming and keeping perfectly still when he stopped.

This is the only way in which one can get very close to a drumming cock, as they seem to stop and listen between acts, to see that all is well.

Finally, we got up very close to the log, within fifty feet perhaps, when Ben suddenly motioned to me to come forward. We always spoke in signs in the woods, just as the Indians do; this does not disturb the creature watched.

I crept forward as lightly as I could and peered down between two tree trunks in the direction that Ben indicated with his finger.

The log was in a rather open spot and to my great surprise I saw two cock partridges

standing upon it, one at either end, with their heads down and facing each other in the most belligerent attitude.

Their feathers were all bristled up and they looked about twice their ordinary size.

Presently the old cock, with the feathers low down on his legs, sprang at his antagonist and buffeted him off the log. The quarrel was evidently over the log; or, rather, the female partridge whose admiration and love were won by the cock who drummed here, so there was really a good deal at stake.

The younger cock did not take the buffet that sent him to the ground kindly, for he at once sprang back and dealt the old cock such a blow with beak and wings, that the real owner of the log was dislodged from his perch.

This was the signal for a battle royal. Such a battle as makes the fighting of the ordinary barnyard fowl seem tame enough. The partridge is much quicker and stronger for its size than any domestic fowl. Where the slower domestic fowl would strike once

these lightning-like birds struck twice and the buffet of their wings sounded like the beating of a carpet.

Up and down they went, sometimes fighting on the log and sometimes on the ground. Sometimes meeting on the ground and sometimes in mid-air, as towards the latter part of the battle each tried to pull feathers from his rival's breast.

Flash, flash, slap, slap, went their wings.

All through the fight the older cock seemed to have the better of it. Once he bowled his rival over and we thought he was vanquished, but the youngster was game and he soon went back to the fight.

The female partridge, sitting somewhere near the log, was evidently to his liking. Perhaps the old cock had gotten his sweetheart away from him; certainly he battled bravely.

At last his powerful rival dealt him a terrible blow that left him motionless under the bushes and the old cock ran to him and began pecking at his head.

"Here, stop, you'll kill him," shouted Ben, starting to the assistance of the vanquished cock.

At the sound of his voice the victorious cock rose in air with a roar of wings and went sailing down the aisles of the May woods with the speed of an express train.

We went to where the apparently lifeless partridge lay, and Ben picked him up. He did not even flutter and to my untutored mind he was stone dead.

"Guess he won't fight any more, Ben," I said, feeling bad for the poor bird.

"His heart still flutters," replied Ben. "We'll take him down to the brook and sprinkle a little water on him, and I guess he will be as good as new, but it will rather astonish him when he comes to, to see what company he is keeping."

So we took the apparently lifeless bird to the spring and Ben sprinkled his head with water and then laid him on the grass to see what would happen.

After a few minutes he fluttered feebly and

then stood up. His eyes looked dazed and he did not seem really to know just where he was; then a furtive look came into them and he squatted low on the ground and watched us intently.

Suddenly there was a roar of wings just over my head that made me duck and clutch the top of my head with both hands. I looked on the ground and my cock partridge was gone.

"Where is he, Ben?" I asked.

"There," replied Ben with a grin, "and pretty lively for a dead bird, too."

I looked where Ben indicated, and saw the cock sailing away, already nearly out of sight in the distant cover.

"I guess he has had all he will want of old feather-legs," said Ben, with a chuckle. "He ought to have known better. Did you notice his markings, Harry? He was a beautiful bird, with copper-colored markings and a reddish ruff. We don't see partridges marked like him often in these parts.

"There'll be a nest somewhere near that

drumming log. We'll keep our eyes open and see if we can find it. The partridge's drumming is a part of his courtship and early married life. One can usually find the nest within five or ten rods of the log. The partridge drums for his mate, just as the woodpecker does, but the female partridge does not answer as does the female woodpecker. Mrs. Partridge is more modest than that. Now I guess we had better attend to our fence mending."

The following day we searched for the nest, but at first were unsuccessful in finding it.

"You see," said Ben, when we had about given up the search, "the female partridge will lie very close when she is on the nest, and you have nearly to run over her before she flies; she hates to disclose the precious spot.

"Sometimes it is in a brush heap, and sometimes under the edge of an old log, but it is always hidden wonderfully well. Mrs. Partridge does not want the red squirrel to find it and eat her eggs. It would be still worse to have the weasel find the nest. Now

the top of that old fallen spruce would be a likely place; try it, Harry."

I went to the spruce top and peered in but could see nothing; then I struck with my axe helve, and the female partridge ran quickly from the underbrush, and flew away into the deep woods.

"There, what did I tell you?" exclaimed Ben exultantly. "Now let's see what we can find."

We poked away the thick branches and found the nest, with eight eggs in it.

"She hasn't got done laying yet," said Ben. "She will have anywhere from ten to fifteen eggs when she has finished."

"Ben," I said, all excitement, "I have got a plan; let's wait until she has set upon the eggs for a while and when they are almost ready to hatch let's put my bantam on the eggs and let her finish hatching them, and see if the partridge chicks won't claim her for their mother and we will have a brood of young partridges to raise."

"How shall we keep Mrs. Partridge from

pounding the life out of Seebright when we are gone?" asked Ben. "It won't do to move the eggs."

"We can stake down some wire netting over the nest and make it tight enough so not even a weasel could get in."

"Quite a plan, Harry, quite a plan," replied Ben. "I believe I will try it. I'd be curious to see how it would work myself."

About three weeks later one evening at dusk old Ben and I might have been seen hurrying to the woods. I had Seebright under my coat and she was clucking and scolding away vigorously. Ben was carrying a large roll of fine wire netting and some stakes that he had made for the purpose.

"It's a mean trick," he said as we climbed over the wall, "but I am mighty curious to see how it will come out."

Mrs. Partridge was very loath to leave her nest, for she knew as well as we did that it was nearly time for her eggs to hatch. So she quitted and fluttered about for a time, trying every stratagem known to mother

partridges to get us to chase her away from the vicinity of her precious nest. Finally she flew away and we showed Seebright the nest with twelve warm eggs in it.

The little bantam seemed delighted with our discovery, and she settled down upon the eggs just as though it had been her own nest and not that of her wild kindred.

Ben and I then staked the netting down carefully about her, making a fine netted coop; not even a weasel could have gotten her when we had finished.

We then put in some corn and a dish of water and left her to finish hatching the young partridges.

The following afternoon we went to the woods to see how Seebright was getting along. We had barely entered the forest and were still quite a distance from the nest when we heard the quick clucking and cries of "quit, quit," that the mother partridge always uses when she is trying to hide her young.

"Quick, Harry, quick," cried Ben, and we

hurried forward. We were just in time to see a bevy of tiny partridges scurrying in every direction, while the mother was fluttering about upon the ground in great agony. I sprang forward to catch her, but she slipped from my grasp. Then I remembered something that had happened once before when Ben and I discovered a brood of partridge chicks, and did not try further to catch her. Presently she flew away and I turned to see what Ben was doing.

He was sitting on a log laughing and I could see that he was immensely pleased about something.

I did not think that he was laughing at my trying to catch the lame mother partridge, for I had only been fooled for a minute.

"Well, well, Harry, that old partridge has completely whipped us at our own game. Never heard of anything quite so slick in my whole life."

"I know she has hidden all her chicks and gotten away herself," I answered, "but what

of that; let's go and see how Seebright and the eggs are coming on."

"Seebright and the eggs!" exclaimed Ben chuckling. "She hasn't any eggs. These are her eggs hiding here in the brake."

I opened my mouth wide with astonishment.

"Why, Ben, you don't mean that the eggs have hatched and our partridge chicks are gone, do you?"

"Just so," replied my companion. "I know it just as well as though I had looked under Seebright. Mrs. Partridge has beaten us at our own game. When she found that another was sitting on her eggs she was probably mighty put out, but finding she could do nothing, she just hung about to see how it would all end. Maybe she had a plan in her wise head. I can't just say as to that. You see the eggs were probably further along than we imagined and they hatched last night. When they were all hatched, Mrs. Partridge coolly called the chicks away from Seebright through the meshes of the wire-netting and

walked off with the whole brood, without as much as saying 'Thank you for your trouble, Seebright.' "

It was all just as Ben had supposed. We found the nest empty, and Seebright angrily bristling and clucking under the netting.

I took her out and put her under my coat, but she would not be comforted. She considered that we had played a mean trick on her and she pecked savagely at me.

Ben rolled up the netting and we trudged homeward, my companion philosophizing as we went. He was greatly pleased at the turn of affairs, but I was terribly disappointed, for I had planned an elaborate partridge farm from which I would reap great riches.

"I tell you what, Harry, there isn't much use trying to get ahead of nature and her wild creatures. If you do get one of them in a trap or pitfall, they are so helpless and scornful of you that it takes all the fun out of the victory.

"But usually they get the best of us just as Mrs. Partridge did. The partridge is a

fine, self-reliant bird. The chicks will run and almost fly before their feathers fairly get dry. In twenty-four hours they are hunting for their own living. What their mother don't know about bringing up chicks isn't worth knowing. She gives them their dust bath and their rotten wood bath, and keeps them free from nits and lice. She knows what is good for the grub in the head and for all the ailments that chicks are heir to. She varies their diet with berries, bugs, insects, grasshoppers, crickets and lots of other dainties, and when they need physic she knows where the berries that they want grow.

"She covers them with her wings when they are chicks and when they are partly grown she teaches them her store of partridge wisdom, that they may take care of themselves when the brood breaks up. They learn partly from precept and partly from imitation, just as all the young things in the wilderness do.

"Night after night they huddle close together, each greeting the last comer as they

gather, with soft loving clucks and cheets. The vigilant mother shields them from the hawk, the owl, the fox, the weasel and the snare.

“Perhaps it is the hunter that finally breaks up this happy family, or perhaps it is the autumn madness that always attacks the young birds in November. Finally they all go their several ways and each fights the battle of existence for himself.

“Here we are, Harry, at your gate. Good-night.”

CHAPTER XI
'A LIVELY BEE HUNT'



CHAPTER XI

A Lively Bee Hunt

ONE Saturday afternoon in June about two months after our talk about bees, old Ben came into the yard wearing a most ridiculous-looking thing on his head.

It was about as large as a good-sized water pail, and came down over his head and rested on his shoulders. It was made from a framework of wire, covered with mosquito netting. The whole protected the face entirely, but from what, I did not just know.

"Why, Ben, what kind of a thing do you call that?" I asked. "Looks as though you had a giant's hat on and it was about twice too large for you."

"That's a 'veil,'" replied Ben, "and I have brought along one for you; I made it this morning. Let's see how it fits."

So I took off my hat and slipped the queerly-shaped thing over my head, until it rested on my shoulders just as Ben's did. It was a most interesting headgear, and I was delighted with it.

"What is it for, Ben?" I asked.

Ben laughed. "It is to keep off bees. We are going bee-hunting, Harry, and so I have brought along these bee-veils. Although we may not have any use for them, I thought it would be well for us to have them along."

I was all excitement to go, and we soon set off across the fields, Ben leading the way as usual. Besides the bee-veils Ben carried a small box with a slide cover, which could be opened readily.

Inside the box was some honey, and Ben explained to me that this was to decoy the bees into the box, where they would load up with honey. When released they would at once set off for their tree in a *bee-line*, to store the honey.

I was the first to discover a bee, and pointed it out to Ben with great excitement.

"Pooh, Harry, that's only a drone," said the old man contemptuously. "He wouldn't be any better than a fly. He would just eat up our honey and then fly away without as much as saying 'thank you.' He wouldn't go back to the tree, but would go dawdling about anywhere he happened to like. Drones aren't any use in a bee hunt. You can tell them by the deep booming sound of their wings. They fly much more heavily than the workers. They are also slightly larger. Ah, here comes a worker."

Old Ben drew the slide of his small box and stood perfectly still, while the honey-bee hummed about our heads. "She's smelled it; they have great noses," he explained. "It is by scent that the guards at the door of each hive tell whether a bee belongs to their hive or not and decide whether they will let her in. Imagine you and me having to tell all our relatives by the sense of smell!"

After hunting about for a few seconds, the bee entered our box and Ben shut the slide and left her to take her fill.

"She'll be ready to make a bee-line for home in a few minutes," he said. "It is mighty queer how all these little creatures know the way home. The homing pigeon's instinct is wonderful. After they have been trained these birds will fly hundreds and even a thousand miles home, bringing a message to some beleaguered fort, or from some starving villagers in a dreary, desolate land. The homing pigeons are most useful creatures in time of war. They have been used ever since Noah let the dove go from the ark."

I smiled and old Ben continued:

"Harry, think of this. Sometimes they will take one of these little birds hundreds of miles out to sea on a ship, and then toss it up into the air to seek its home.

"All about in every direction, as far as the eye can reach, is nothing but the rolling sea, endless and terrible. If the poor pigeon did not fly in the right direction, it might have to fly and fly, on and on, until it dropped exhausted into the sea.

"But the pigeon has a God-given instinct,

that is better than man's compass. Some pigeon breeders say that this instinct is located in the large bunches about the ears, for the best homing pigeons are the breeds with the largest bunches.

"Well, that pigeon set adrift above old ocean doesn't need any landmarks. He just circles about two or three times until something inside him tells him which way to point his bill and then he starts, straight as an arrow he goes, and never once turns to right or left until he drops into the home-cote."

While Ben had been talking he had released the captive bee, which had flown home.

When she returned she brought three more bees with her, all of whom we made captive.

"I guess we have got bees enough by this time and some of them ought to be pretty well loaded up. I'll let out one. Now get your eye on it when it leaves the box and when you see what direction it is going just leg it and chase it clean home."

If there was any twinkle in Ben's eye when he said these words I did not notice it. So

when the bee, laden with sweets, for which it had not labored, came forth, circled about for a few seconds and then started across the fields in a line straight as a telephone wire, I started after it at my best pace.

"Leg it, leg it, Harry," shouted my companion. "I am afraid she is going to get away from you."

I doubled my efforts, but in vain, for the speck in the air above me grew smaller and smaller and just as I lost it I heard Ben shout, "Look out," but his cry came too late.

Without the slightest warning I plunged head first into the meadow ditch.

My bee-veil was jammed down on to my head and crushed out of shape, and I was covered with mud and water.

"Too bad, Harry, too bad," said Ben, helping me out a minute later. "I guess you're not hurt much. I shouted for you to look out, but you were so hard after that bee that you didn't hear me.

"That is the trouble with chasing bees pell-mell crosslots. You want to be cross-eyed,

and have one eye look down, and the other up. If you keep your eyes on the bee, you go into a hole, and if you look down you lose your bee. It's real inconsiderate of bees not to travel the highways when they start for home.

"Now we will follow along in the direction that this bee took for thirty or forty rods, and then we will let out another and that one will continue the trail for us. You see it is a kind of relay race."

When we let out the second bee I let Ben lead off in the chase after it, while I followed carefully behind.

As much as I loved Ben I was rather in hopes that he would fall into a ditch, or trip on a stick so that I could laugh, but he did not.

I do not know how he managed it, but he always seemed to find the smooth places.

This time we followed the bee much farther than we did the first, but it was finally lost.

"There isn't much use of you and me try-

ing to make sixty miles an hour, Harry," said Ben at the end of a longer chase than usual, after which we both stood panting.

"That is about what a bee makes when she is lining it out for home. Last year they raced some bees with carrier pigeons, and the bees came in ahead. They sprinkled dust on their wings so they could be sure that it was the same bees that won out."

The eight or ten bees that we had captured took us about a mile and near to the deep woods.

The last one that we let out flew back in just the opposite direction from that which the other bees had taken.

"We have gone past the tree," said Ben, "and it can't be a great way off."

Ben again opened the box containing honey, and we sat down upon a knoll to wait for developments.

In the course of a minute or two a bee came for the sweet which she had evidently smelled.

When she had eaten her fill she did not circle about as the bees had done when we first

started out, but made a straight line for the woods.

Ben did not chase her but sat still and waited for another. Soon it came, and another and another, until a dozen had filled themselves at the box.

"Do you see that old broken-topped maple at the edge of the woods?" asked Ben, pointing out the tree in question.

"Well, that is the bee-tree. I have had my eye on it for some time, and they all fly for it as straight as a string.

"Here comes another. Now we will keep this one and see what she will tell us."

So we made a captive of the bee and then went up close to the maple stub. Finally Ben let the prisoner go, and it flew straight to the maple and disappeared inside through a deep crack in the trunk.

"That settles it," said Ben, "this is our bee-tree.

"Now you gather a lot of twigs and dry sticks and we will see what virtue there is in a little smoke. Long before bees ever had

reason to fear man they feared smoke. It was the forest fires of pre-historic times that taught the bee fear of smoke. Smoke seems to paralyze and stupefy the swarm, and a few whiffs are worth a good deal when you are after honey."

So I gathered a large pile of fagots, and we soon had a bright blaze going. Then Ben put on rotten wood and grass to make it smudge, and we soon had a great column of smoke pouring into the tree.

At first the bees came out in a black, angry cloud, and I fled to a safe distance, but Ben did not seem to mind them. Finally the smoke drove them all into the tree, and Ben began to cut it down.

The outer shell of the old stub was very hard and it seemed to me that Ben never would get it down. At last, without the slightest warning, it fell with a mighty crash, breaking open at the crack where we had seen the bees enter.

I never would have believed that such small creatures as bees could have made such a

roaring with their wings as that swarm made when it poured forth in a black cloud, to avenge itself upon the destroyers of its home.

In an instant the air about us was black with them.

I thrust my hands into my pockets to protect them and ran pell-mell into a thick growth of scrub hemlock which was near at hand.

My bee-veil protected my face and neck nicely, but some of the sharp bayonets of this infuriated army pricked the skin on my wrists, and one went up my pants leg on a voyage of discovery.

I yelled with pain and fought them desperately.

I was lucky enough to get off with four or five stings, but these made my wrists swell badly.

When the bees at last left me, and I peeped out of the bushes to see how it fared with old Ben, I saw, to my great astonishment, that he was sitting on one end of the fallen log,

with a swarm of bees about him, but apparently quite unconcerned.

"Run, Ben," I cried; "you will be stung to death."

"They won't hurt me. I have handled the little critters before. I am better protected than you, for I have on a pair of gloves that protect my wrists. I meant to have told you to go farther back when the tree fell, but it got ahead of me.

"We'll put some mud on those stings of yours and it will soon cure them. That is the remedy all the wild creatures use. But we are well paid for our pains. There is a hundred pounds of honey in this tree if there is an ounce."

When the roaring of the angry swarm had partially died down, I went nearer to see the honey.

It was a most beautiful sight. Although the comb had been considerably broken in the fall, yet it still kept many of its fantastic shapes.

Running up and down in the middle of the

cavity was a solid pillar of comb, eight or nine inches in diameter, and that was fastened to the inside of the cavity every foot or so, by smaller braces of comb, filled with delicious honey.

Ben said these braces were put in to steady the main column, and keep it from falling.

We took out two large milk pails full of the delicious sweet and left as much more in the tree.

The following day we came back and got the rest, but the swarm, which we also intended to capture, had disappeared.

"They didn't want to trust themselves to our mercies any longer," said Ben. "They will find another hollow tree, and before the frost has closed the late goldenrod and the purple asters, they will have sweet enough stored up to carry them through the cold weather. If we had brought their house down about their heads a month or two later, they would probably have all perished.

"I always feel as mean as dirt when I take away the honey that the poor bee has gathered

drop by drop, bringing some of it three miles perhaps.

“If the bee labored so hard, it seems as though she ought to have it. But man makes all earth’s creatures work for him, and sometimes he is not even grateful.”

CHAPTER XII
THE SPECKLED HEIFER'S CALF



CHAPTER XII

The Speckled Heifer's Calf

THE speckled heifer was my very own, and of course a wonderful cow. She had been mine ever since she was a frisky spotted calf, looking very much like a fawn.

I had taught her to drink milk from a bucket and had tethered her out all the first summer in the backyard. In fact, she was a spoiled and petted calf, and that was probably why she hid her own first calf when it was born.

This was a great disappointment to me, as I had hoped that the new calf would mate one that I already had and make a pair of steers.

We knew well enough that the speckled heifer had a calf somewhere in the great pasture, but, where, was the question. The heifer's bag was large, and her udders were wet each morning when we found her quietly

feeding, as though her thoughts were upon anything but calves.

I spent several days watching and spying upon her, but with no success. As long as I was in sight she would eat grass or lie in the shade and chew her cud, but as soon as I got interested in a bird's nest, or a berry patch she was gone, and I would see no more of her that day. We tried taking a dog into the pasture in hopes of frightening her into fleeing to her bossy, but the experiment was a failure.

The sight of the dog seemed to drive the young cow almost frantic and to fill her with blind, unreasonable rage. She charged the poor dog, who was innocent of any evil towards her, again and again, until at last the bewildered canine stuck his tail between his legs and ran out of the pasture. Then she turned upon Ben and me.

Ben took refuge in a thicket, so she left him, and came for me. At first I thought I was not afraid of the speckled heifer; was she not my own bossy and had I not petted her ever since the day she was born? I called

"Bossy, Bossy," in my most persuasive tones, but she came at me like a mad creature, forcing me to shin up a small tree with all possible speed.

When I had reached a safe limb I looked for Ben, and discovered him peeping out of the thicket, and laughing.

"Harry," he called, "that heifer has gone stark mad for the moment and you and I had better make ourselves scarce. She will be all right again when she has had time to cool off. Mother love is a queer instinct."

The most dangerous animal in the world is an enraged mother who thinks her young are threatened. When the speckled heifer had gone away to feed in a different part of the pasture, Ben and I slunk away just as the poor dog had done, and left her to chew the cud of reflection.

The following morning when we visited the pasture a wonderful change had come over the heifer. She stood at the bars bellowing and moaning pitifully. Her eyes were large and full of pain, her muzzle was covered with

foam, and her sides were wet with sweat. In addition to this, there were deep scratches upon her back and shoulders and she was trembling as though with great fear.

When she saw us coming she redoubled her lowing, and started off across the pasture at a brisk trot.

"Something is up," said Ben. "She is eager enough to show us where the calf is now, but in my opinion it won't do any good, for we will find it dead."

My grief and astonishment at this announcement were too great for words, so I trotted along silently behind Ben, hoping against hope that he would be mistaken for once.

There was no sham or deceit about the speckled heifer to-day and we had to go at a brisk trot to keep up with her. She occasionally looked back to see if we were following, and seemed rather afraid that we would turn back.

She led us straight to the deep woods and in and out, among the thickets until we came

to a thick clump of spruce. These trees stood so close together that their spreading tops kept out the sunlight quite effectively and a kind of twilight or gloom always reigned beneath them.

There, in the deepest shadows, as though to screen so sad a sight from the bright light of day, lay the little bossy for which we had searched so long and diligently. He was a perfect beauty, as nature had designed him, with a sleek, glossy coat, generously flecked and dappled like his mother's, but, as we beheld him, he was a pitiful sight.

His throat was horribly torn as though by hungry fangs, his head and neck were badly lacerated and he was besmeared with his own bright blood, and covered with blow-flies. The ground about was trampled and blood-stained, the ferns and underbrush were broken and there was every evidence of a desperate struggle.

I was too grief-stricken to speak. Ben was carefully noticing all the signs, as was his Indian way. When he had examined the

wounds upon the dead calf carefully, and noted all the hoofprints in the trampled forest carpet, he fell to examining a near-by tree trunk.

"Seems to me this tree trunk looks mighty interesting, Harry," he exclaimed. "What do you think about it?"

"Looks just like all the rest of the tree trunks," I replied in disgust. It annoyed me that Ben should think of such trifling things as how tree trunks looked at a time like this.

"Come here, Harry," said he, "and let me show you that it does not look just like all the other tree trunks."

I followed Ben's finger carefully from point to point, as he showed me where the bark had been scratched and torn off. At each of these points was a deep scar in the bark, that showed the white wood beneath. Finally Ben picked two soft gray hairs from beneath a sliver of bark, and held them up for my inspection.

"Look like cat hairs," I suggested.

"Mightily," replied Ben. "They are cat

hairs, and they came out of the coat of a wild-cat."

"A wildcat," I exclaimed in astonishment, at the same time looking up into the branches overhead apprehensively; "where in the world did it come from?"

"Oh, up on the mountain," replied Ben. "There have been litters of bobcats raised on the mountain off and on for several years, but they don't often hunt so far from home. The kittens must be quite cats by this time, and so their mother has to hunt far and near to satisfy them.

"It happened last evening, probably, at about twilight. The great cats hunt in the morning and evening. Sometimes they hunt by moonlight, but rarely in broad daylight.

"Mrs. Bobcat probably came prowling through the pasture in search of a gray rabbit and with no thought of calf. She is rather dull colored this time of year, and is hardly noticeable among the browns of the ferns and the dried up weeds. A bobcat always sneaks along like a gray shadow. She probably

came upon the calf in hiding when its mother was feeding and pounced upon it, without considering that there was a mother to reckon with. There is where it was lying. Here are the hoof prints where the poor calf plunged about, probably with the cat upon its back tearing at its throat. I presume about that time it did some tall bleating and Specky appeared on the scene.

“Then Mrs. Bobcat went up this tree. I have already shown you the clawprints. The cat had a rather close call, too, for here is a scar where the heifer’s horn has ripped the bark off.

“This attack probably infuriated the cat and she revenged herself by dropping on the heifer’s back. That is how she came to be so clawed. Then the heifer lost her head and lit out. The bobcat must have hopped off when she had ridden a few rods, and come back to finish the calf. The heifer must have run clear down to the bars.”

I opened both my eyes and mouth wide with astonishment as Ben unfolded the story

of this little tragedy. A moment before the whole thing had seemed an inscrutable mystery, and here it was before our eyes as plain as the page of a printed book.

"You piece things together just like a block puzzle," I said. "I never could have made it out at all, but it comes to you just like a story."

"It all comes with time, Harry," replied the old man. "Reading signs is a science, just like astronomy, and has to be acquired. We'll leave the calf just as he is, and to-morrow we will be around and have a wildcat hunt."

"How are you going to manage it, Ben?" I asked, for it seemed to me like rather dangerous business. To my fancy the tops of all the trees in the pasture were already swarming with bobcats, which might drop down upon our heads at any moment.

"Oh, I guess we will manage it all right," Ben replied. "I will borrow a fox hound and you can go along with a pail of salt. When the dog gets the cat good and tired by

running her, you can creep up and put the salt on her tail. Then we can carry her home in a bag."

Had it not been for the twinkle in Ben's eye as he explained his plan, I should have thought the program decidedly alarming. Even as it was, I fairly lamed my neck looking up into the treetops as we journeyed home. I could see Ben watching me from the corner of his eye and trying not to smile.

The following morning, just when the pink and saffron east had begun to glow and blush, I was awakened by pebbles being tossed against my bedroom window.

"Come, come, bobcat hunter, get up! The trail will get cold if we wait too long," called a voice below.

When I joined Ben a few moments later on the back porch, I found to my great surprise that he was not armed, except with a stout club, while in his other hand he carried a small tin pail.

"Why, Ben, where is old Kentucky?" I

asked, feeling almost afraid to start out on this hunting trip without Ben's trusty rifle.

"Oh, she is pretty heavy, and I thought I had better leave her at home," drawled my companion, "but I have brought along your pail of salt. You see I rely mostly on you and the salt."

A cold chill crept down my spine. Did Ben really intend to have me go after the cat with salt? If so, I would rather be excused.

I peeped into the pail and saw that it contained sulphur, instead of salt, and so was quite relieved.

The dew was very heavy and the grass was full of cobwebs. Ben said it was a fine morning for "trailing."

We lost no time in getting to the woods, but, before letting the hound go, we made a complete circle of the spot where the dead calf lay, keeping the dog on the leash.

The hound at once discovered the trail and by the way he jumped about and whined to

be let loose, we knew that the track was very fresh.

When we untied the cord from his collar, the hound went off at a brisk pace, while its long drawn owe-e-u-u-wowu-u wow-u-u floated pleasantly back to us on the fresh morning wind.

As soon as the hound was fairly off, we ran to a commanding position about a third of the way up the mountain.

For about five minutes the hound wound in and out through the woods, then started for the mountain at a lively clip. To my great astonishment the dog ran by within a few rods of us, and I hardly dared to breathe as the chase drew near. I fully expected to see a bobcat, about the size of a tiger, break into the open.

"Why didn't we see it go by, Ben?" I whispered.

"It went before we came up," replied Ben. "Look there!"

At the moment he spoke, the long-drawn notes of the fox hound changed to short

sharp barks, interspersed with excited yelps.

I looked in the direction indicated and saw a large gray animal, with a short tail and a whiskery face, spring lightly upon the trunk of a tree that had been partly blown down, but which still stood at an angle lodged against its fellows.

The cat scratched up the trunk for eight or ten feet and then, in a frenzy of rage that fairly made my hair stand on end, began tearing the bark from the tree, at the same time uttering a series of the most blood-curdling screeches and snarls. The bark came down in showers, the cat's claws flew so rapidly that I could scarcely see them, while the screeching seemed to my ears like the screaming of a panther.

"Let's go home, Ben," I whispered between the chattering of my teeth. "She might see us. You know we aren't armed."

Ben laughed. "A bobcat won't fight unless she is cornered," he said. "You can go

home if you wish to, but you don't want to leave me to be eaten alive, do you?"

I made no reply, though I felt anything but comfortable. To tell the truth, at that moment, I wished that I was at home in the ten acre lot hoeing corn, or almost anywhere else than where I was.

Presently the cat jumped from the tree trunk and ran up the mountain side, the dog following in hot haste.

Its long drawn owe-e-w-u had once more changed to a quick bark varied by excited yelps.

In five minutes more the barking had changed to nothing but yelps and Ben cried, "Good, the cat has either treed or holed. Come on, Harry."

I was afraid to go and still more afraid to stay behind, so I followed Ben, fairly treading on his heels in my anxiety to keep as close to my companion as possible.

We found the hound barking and scratching away excitedly at a fair-sized hole in a great ledge.



UTTERING A SERIES OF MOST BLOOD CURDLING
SCREECHES AND SNARLS



Ben seemed much pleased at this discovery, and, for final evidence that the cat had holed, he picked a gray hair from the edge of the rock and held it up for my inspection.

"Looks just like the one we saw on the tree, Harry," he said. "Now you take the pail and scramble into the hole and feed the cat some brimstone, while I stay outside and keep the male bobcat from coming in and disturbing you."

"Not much," I said. "I haven't lost any bobcat."

Ben brought a large flat stone and placed it so that it would cover the entrance to the den. Then he put the brimstone into the mouth of the den and set fire to it, covering the flat stone over with his coat, that none of the fumes might escape.

For a minute or two, all was silent inside, but finally we heard a coughing and scratching; then the cat made a sudden rush for the entrance of the den.

I was terribly afraid that the stone would

be pushed aside, but Ben only gripped his club and grinned at my alarm.

"Guess I better let him out, Harry," he said at length. "It seems to be strangling him," and to my horror he raised the stone so as to make a small crack.

Ben had gone mad, but his folly should be on his own head. I was not going to be food for a bobcat.

Then Ben let go his hold on the stone and it fell flat in front of the hole leaving the entrance free. With a yell of terror, I started down the mountain side, not stopping even to choose my footing, feeling that to break my neck was better than to be clawed to ribbons.

Presently, I made a misstep and landed in a heap at the bottom of a little gully. When I picked myself up, I heard Ben calling to me. "Come back, Harry," he hallooed. "It's all over. I've killed the bobcat."

I clambered back but took care to reconnoiter at a safe distance.

It was just as Ben had said. The big gray cat lay dead at his feet. My courage came

back and I joined him and the hound at the entrance of the den.

"How in the world did you kill it, Ben?" I asked. "You didn't have any gun."

"I didn't need any," he replied. "It was so stupefied that it wouldn't have known its own grandmother. The brimstone did the business. I simply knocked her on the head when she came out."

It was a fine specimen of the bobcat, or bay lynx, as it should really be called. Its coat was long and silky, of a grayish tone, striped and flecked with light brown. There were several brown streaks along the back and some tawny patches upon the sides. The tail had several dark rings and was tipped with black. The animal's long, sharp, white claws sent a shiver down my back as I felt them.

When we had carried the cat home, Ben brought out the spring scales and, tying a cord about the bobcat's hind legs, he hooked in the scales and swung the splendid specimen clear of the ground. My eyes opened

wide as the indicator sprung down until it registered thirty-six pounds. After all, to have such a fine skin as this was some compensation for the loss of the speckled heifer's calf.

CHAPTER XIII
CAMPING WITH OLD BEN.

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Camping With Old Ben

WHEN old Ben told me one August day that we would go away into the great woods for a week's camping out, and that we would start within a day or two, my joy knew no bounds.

I rolled upon the ground and shouted, stood upon my head and turned hand-springs. In fact, my joy was so great that I could not find any kind of antic that quite expressed it.

This had long been a dream of delight which I had thought almost too good ever to come true, but here it was about to be realized. "Which would you rather live in, a tent or a shack?" asked Ben, when I had become sufficiently calmed to consider details.

"A tent would be better in a rain-storm, but a shack is mighty clean and pleasant, and it smells so woodsy that I like it myself."

"Wouldn't we come home, Ben," I asked,

"if it rained very hard?" The idea of withstanding a soaking rain-storm of a day or two had never occurred to me until that moment. To my notion, camping out was all sunshine, warmth and sweet air.

"You might, if you want to, but you don't think that I would come chasing home for a shower, do you? You would make a healthy guide, if you are afraid of getting your skin wet."

"Oh, I am not afraid," I replied. "I had never thought of stormy weather."

"Perhaps we had better take a tent and make a shack, too," Ben suggested, "then we will be fixed for almost any kind of weather."

The next two days were busy ones for us both. We had to lay in a store of provisions and overhaul the tent, which was an old one that Ben had not used for several years.

I whittled an entire new lot of tent pegs and felt quite like an Indian making a wigwam.

The third day after the expedition had been proposed by Ben, we loaded our outfit into

the express wagon, and father drove us to what was called the great woods. The latter part of the journey had to be made through pastures over an old wood road and I got out and opened the gates or took down the bars between the pastures.

We arrived upon the outskirts of this wilderness, as it seemed to me, in the afternoon and at once set to work on our camp.

When we had unloaded our camp supplies, and father and the old express wagon had disappeared between the tree trunks, Ben looked critically about us.

"This isn't just an ideal camping spot," he said, "but I guess it will have to do for to-night. We haven't much time to look about. We will just camp here to-night, and to-morrow we can look around a bit. I'll put up the tent, and you go and look for a spring.

"I usually find the spring first and then pitch the tent near it, but I haven't time to look for one to-night so we will trust to luck.

"See the top of those black ashes yonder, you look over there. It is low ground, and

black ash always grows in a moist spot, so I presume you will find either a small brook or a spring somewhere near."

It was only a few rods away, almost within sight of our prospective camp, so I hurried off, glad that Ben had thought me capable of doing an important part of getting our first camp ready.

The black ashes proved to be on moist land, as Ben had predicted, but there was no well defined waterway, although the ground was soft and swampy.

I circled about, quartering like a fox hound, as Ben had taught me to do when looking for anything in the woods, but no spring could I find. I was loath to give up and be beaten in this my first attempt in helping, but finally was obliged to turn back without having discovered water.

I had gone but a few rods from camp, or so it seemed to me, and was quite sure of the direction back to my starting point.

I hastened, for it was getting towards twilight, and long black shadows were already

creeping through the woods. Somehow it seemed mighty lonesome away from Ben although I would not have admitted it for the world.

To my great astonishment I found that camp did not lie just beyond some spruces as I had thought, so I turned back to my starting point and tried another direction, but that seemed to lead me still deeper into the woods.

This would never do, I must be more careful, so I went back to a clump of birches that I had just started from, to try it over again, but to my dismay they were not the same birches, but a new clump.

How long and black the shadows were. How still it was; I must hurry. So I started on a run in a new direction which I felt sure would bring me to camp.

As soon as I began running, my alarm, which had not been great up to that point, increased tenfold, and I ran hither and thither, like a deer, taking almost no note of landmarks, as Ben had taught me to do, but trying to cover as many rods as possible in the short-

est time. I scratched my hands and face in the underbrush and twice went head over heels upon the ground, but that was nothing.

In a short time I was back again at the clump of birches, so I tried another direction, but came right back to the same place.

It was terrible; did all the paths in the woods lead right back to this spot? Then it dawned upon me, I was running about in a circle.

I had read of such cases in books. Of how men became lost in the woods and ran around and around in a circle until they dropped of fatigue. Suddenly the sweet green woods with its lengthening shadows seemed to stretch out in every direction for a million miles. I was the only living creature in all that vast solitude unless it was filled with bears, wolves, ghosts and hobgoblins. Such a wild terror as I have never known before or since seized me. My hair seemed to stand up, my teeth chattered, my heart thumped away at my ribs as though it would jump through between them; I seemed as small as a

sand flea in the middle of a desert. Never, never as long as the world stood, would I be able to get out of this hateful woods.

At last the silence and the terror of it grew so upon me, that I lifted up my voice and yelled like a savage. I did not give one shout and then listen to see if it was answered but bellowed at the top of my lungs, drawing my breath with great sobs between the deafening passages of my distress.

"Hello, that you, Harry?" cried a cheerful voice that was so near to me that I ceased my bellowing instantly.

Stifling my sobs as best I could and wiping the tears from my cheeks with the back of my hand, I rushed towards the spot from whence came the voice.

"Have you treed a panther, Harry," he asked, "or was it a pack of Apaches that I just heard?"

"You needn't laugh at me," I blubbered. "I have been lost. How did you find me so quick?"

"I find you, I find you, boy! Why, I

haven't been looking for you. I guess you found yourself."

"Well, how come you away off here when I left you making camp, miles away from here?" I asked.

Ben very considerably stifled a laugh and sneezed instead. Then motioned to me to come to him.

"What do you call that?" he asked, pointing to the tent which was already up, although it had been screened from me by some trees.

"That's the tent," I replied, feeling that I was being made a fool of, "but you have moved it. This isn't the place where we were going to pitch it."

"The very same," replied Ben. "You've lost your compass, Harry. You have been clear around camp and come out on the opposite side from which you left, so everything looks different.

"I heard you coming—sounded like a moose, and I was just going to halloo to you when you let out that yell. Those lungs of yours can't be beaten.

“When you are in the woods you must notice peculiarities in the trees and that will keep you from getting lost. An old stump, a spreading spruce, an ironwood tree, which is not common, a hillock or a rock, all these things are the guide-boards in the woods that tell you the way back to camp.

“But you needn’t feel cut up about it, Harry. There isn’t any danger that you will get so lost in this county that I could not hear you screech. Now you may look me up some dead sticks for firewood, if you can.”

Ben soon had a bright fire going between three stones that he had arranged forming three sides of a square.

“It is always a good plan to place stones in that way, Harry,” he said, “so your fire won’t keep tumbling down as fast as it burns. If we were real savages, instead of make-believes, starting the fire would be quite a process, and it might take half an hour. We would have to use a flint and some tinder, and it would be quite a trick.”

I opened a can of salmon and it was soon

sending out a fine odor, as it sizzled in the frying-pan.

"Seems as though I could eat it, frying-pan and all," I said.

Ben laughed. "That's the tonic of the woods," he said. "It beats any medicine that I ever heard of for a poor appetite."

When Ben had fried some potatoes, and made some coffee, our supper was ready.

We ate it upon a flat rock and I do not think that anything that I ever ate at home tasted so good.

After supper Ben cut two small hemlocks, and dragged them near the tent, and we set to work to strip them of all their small branches and needles.

"There isn't anything in the world that makes as soft and sweet a bed as hemlock needles," explained Ben. "The odor is a sort of sleeping potion, too; it always does me good to sleep on either hemlock or pine needles."

When we had a large pile of the sweet, springy hemlock plumes, we carried them into

the tent, and Ben showed me how to cover the pile with the blanket, and then tuck the edges under so that when we laid upon it, our bed would not flatten out as much as it would otherwise do. Our second blanket we put on top of the first one, and Ben called it, "the spread."

The bed now being ready, we went outside and piled a lot of wood upon the camp fire and sat down by it, to enjoy a real camp fire talk.

"Of course, we don't need the fire to-night to keep us warm," said Ben, "but it looks so cheerful that I love to watch it burn and see the pictures come and go. Besides it helps to keep off the mosquitoes."

"A bright fire is good to cook with, but a smudge keeps off mosquitoes. To make a smudge, put on some punk, or, if you cannot find that, a bunch of green grass."

I pulled a handful of grass and was astonished to see how quickly a dark wreath of smoke was curling up through the treetops.

"The Indians always used fires for sig-

nals," explained Ben, "and they could communicate several miles away by means of them. This was their telegraph.

"What I enjoy about camping out," continued Ben, "is the wonderful mysterious life all about us. The flowers, the trees, the grass, the birds, the squirrels and all the four-footed creatures. God made the trees to shelter man and to rustle their leaves above his head, and it is a pity that we have to cut down so many of them. Why, Harry, there is more wonder to me in an ant-hill than there is in the whole city of New York. The Brooklyn bridge and the tall blocks, and the great churches are not nearly as hard for man to build as it is for the ants to do some of the things that they do.

"There is music, too, in the woods. The glad trilling of birds, and the joyous chatter of squirrels. The long roll of the cock partridge, and the merry tattoo of the woodpecker. Then the wind and the waters are always talking and the leaves are telling secrets overhead.

"There is always a mystery, too, in the woods. Something to keep you guessing. Was that pitter-patter in the leaves a red squirrel, a chipmunk, or just a shy little wood mouse? How quickly the ear learns to distinguish the steady even trot of the fox, and the hop of the rabbit, the rustle of a twig that denotes a bird, and the bending of the bough that tells you where a squirrel has just sprung.

"The signs, the sights and the sounds of the woods are among earth's sweetest secrets.

"Sometimes I think that I would like to be the wood nymph and have charge of all these furred and feathered creatures myself."

"Who is the wood nymph, Ben?" I asked.

"Oh, just a beautiful young lady who lives in the woods, and looks out for all the wild things and loves and pities them," replied Ben. "Did I ever tell you how 'twas the squirrel got his brush, Harry?"

"No," I exclaimed all excitement, "please tell me."

Ben filled his pipe, and lighted it with a stick from our camp fire and then began.

“ Well, it was this way. One morning a red squirrel was sitting upon a limb, chattering away for dear life, and having the finest time in the world. Nuts were thick as spatter on the tree and the sun was shining brightly, and the squirrel was so glad that he didn’t know what to do about it, so he just frisked and chattered. By and by, along came the wood thrush. ‘ Hold on, Mr. Scatterbrains,’ cried the wood thrush, ‘ I wonder if you know what a noise you are making? Why, if I had such a voice as you have got I would never let any one hear me using it. It fairly sets my nerves on edge. Why don’t you sing like this?’ Wood Thrush swelled out his breast, and poured forth such a sweet song, that the poor squirrel saw at once that his voice was very harsh and discordant.

“ ‘ There,’ said the wood thrush, ending up with a fine trill, ‘ now I would keep quiet, if I were you.’

“ Well, the wood thrush soon flew away, and the squirrel felt so ashamed that he didn’t even squeak again that morning.

“ Pretty soon, along came Blue Jay and he says to Mr. Red Squirrel, ‘ What a rusty old red coat you have got, Mr. Squirrel. If I was you I think I would visit the tailor and get a new suit, your old one is really quite dull. Why don’t you have a suit like mine?’ and Blue Jay flashed his bright blue uniform in the sunlight.

“ Then Mr. Red Squirrel saw that he not only had no voice, but that his coat, upon which he had prided himself, was quite dull compared with that of the blue jay.

“ In those far off times Mr. Red Squirrel’s tail was not the fine brush that it is now, but a smooth tail like that of the rat. So he really had nothing to be proud of.

“ Well, Mr. Red Squirrel felt so bad about it that he finally went to the wood nymph.

“ ‘ Dear Wood Nymph,’ he said, ‘ I am very sad. I have no fine voice like Wood Thrush, and I have no gay coat like Blue

Jay, and they are all making fun of me.'

" 'I am sorry, Red Squirrel,' said the wood nymph in such a sweet voice that Red Squirrel at once felt better. 'It is very impolite of them to put on airs about graces that I gave them. I shall have to speak to them about it. But you are really quite as pretty as they are in your way. Why, don't you see, Mr. Squirrel, you have four legs, and they have but two? You are much better off in that respect.'

" 'That is so,' replied Red Squirrel rather proudly, and he gave a great jump just to show how nimble his legs were. 'If I only had a beautiful tail like a peacock I think I would be perfectly happy.'

" 'The peacock's tail would not do for you at all,' said the wood nymph, 'but I will make yours over and it shall be your flag that you can wave defiantly at Wood Thrush and Blue Jay whenever they tell you you are not beautiful.'

" So Mr. Red Squirrel hopped upon the

beautiful wood nymph's shoulder, and she covered his eyes with one hand, while with the other she stroked his tail.

" 'How long will it take you?' asked the squirrel.

" 'See,' replied the wood nymph, and she uncovered his eyes and Mr. Red Squirrel saw that he had the most wonderful bushy tail in the woods, that is, for his size.

" Then how he frisked about and chattered, and all the time he kept his tail twitching and waving so all the wood folks might see how gay he had become. He was so delighted with his new tail that he did not even stop to thank the wood nymph, but ran away to show it to Wood Thrush, and to Blue Jay.

" When the poor chipmunk saw what the wood nymph had done for Red Squirrel, he was much dissatisfied with his own smooth tail, so he, too, went to the wood nymph.

" 'Dear wood nymph,' cried Chippy, 'my tail is very homely, won't you please fix it like Red Squirrel's?'

" So the kind wood nymph covered Chippy's

eyes with her hand while she made his tail more fluffy and beautiful.

“ ‘It isn’t nearly as large as Red Squirrel’s,’ said Chippy when she had finished.

“ ‘Why, you are not half as large as Red Squirrel yourself,’ replied the wood nymph laughing. ‘I guess it is large enough for your size.’

“ But Chippy was not satisfied, so the wood nymph finally painted his sides with several bright stripes, and that is how he became little Striped Sides.

“ There is another pretty good story,” continued Ben. “ It is about how the skunk got his scent. I presume people have often wondered.

“ One day, years and years ago, a skunk sat down under a juniper bush to think, and he quite naturally got to thinking about himself.

“ ‘What a poor stupid old thing I am,’ he said. ‘I am the most defenseless of all the forest folks. I cannot run away from my enemies like the rabbit, because my legs are short. I cannot bite like the woodchuck be-

cause my teeth are not so sharp. I cannot go into my shell like the turtle when I am threatened because I have no shell. I have no nimble wits like the fox. If something is not done my kind will be exterminated.'

"When the kind wood nymph saw the skunk's sorrowful face, she was troubled, for it saddens her to see any of her creatures grieve.

"She pondered long and deeply upon the subject, and then a bright smile overspread her face. When the skunk saw the smile, he was glad because he knew that the good wood nymph had thought of something fine for him.

" 'Mr. Skunk,' said the wood nymph in her sweetest tones, 'I am most sorry that you were left so defenseless, and I have thought of a plan. I will give you this wonderful smelling bottle, and whenever any of your enemies trouble you, just take out the cork.'

"Mr. Skunk took the magic bottle, and hurried away, eager to try it upon some one of his enemies.

“He did not have to wait long, for soon Mr. Red Fox came creeping by.

“‘Ah, here is a snap,’ he said. ‘My breakfast already cooked. I do believe that the skunk is the stupidest animal in ——’

“But Mr. Fox did not finish his remarks for just at that point, when the fox was about to jump, Mr. Skunk took out the stopper from his magic bottle.

“Mr. Red Fox turned a double somersault in his haste to leave that part of the woods, and he ran away yelping, and pawing at his eyes and nose.

“To this very day Mr. Red Fox always takes off his hat when he meets a skunk, as do all the other animals in the woods.

“Camp fire is getting low, Harry, I guess we had better turn in.”

We scrambled into the tent, like two boys, and threw ourselves upon the luxuriant bed of hemlock. Ben drew the outside blanket over us and tucked it in and in fewer minutes than it takes to tell it, I myself was standing before the wood nymph asking that I might be equipped with wings like the eagle.



MR. FOX DID NOT FINISH HIS REMARKS



CHAPTER XIV
FOREST FOOTFALLS



CHAPTER XIV.

Forest Footfalls

WHAT glorious days those were when Ben and I wandered in the mysterious woods searching out its secrets, becoming each day better acquainted with the birds and squirrels, the rabbits and mice, and all the innumerable family of the wood folks.

Little by little I learned to see with the eyes of a woodsman.

To separate the rabbit from the brown brake in which he squatted, the bird from the leaves in which it sought to screen itself, the squirrel from the knot that he tried to impersonate.

“The only way to see things in the woods,” said Ben one day as we sat on an old log in the leafy green depths, “is to sit still and let them come to you. We folks with all our cunning are so much more stupid than the wild crea-

tures in the woods that they always see or hear us first, and that is why the forest often seems to be deserted when we pass through.

“Perhaps birds have been singing and chirping, and squirrels have been chattering a moment before, but as soon as the clumsy foot of man comes pounding through the woods, all becomes as quiet as though uninhabited.

“A moose, large and clumsy as he seems, can travel more quietly in the woods than the untrained man. One moment the great bull will be standing behind a tree looking out curiously at you as you go thrashing through the aisles of the forest; the next instant, without the slightest sound of a footfall or the snapping of a twig, he fades away like a gray shadow and disappears like a ghost.

“It would surprise you, Harry, to know how many eyes are watching as you go through the woods. Most of the wild creatures do not flee away in panic, but secrete themselves cunningly and watch to see what this strange creature, man, is doing.

“The squirrel flattens himself out on a branch, and a limb two inches in diameter will entirely hide him; or perhaps he may make believe he is a knot upon the tree, and he will do it so well that you will probably be deceived.

“The rabbit usually hides in plain sight, but you think him a stone or a continuation of the end of an old log.

“The owl passes for a bunch of last year’s leaves or a gnarl on the tree. The principal art in hiding in the woods is to keep perfectly still and nature has so fashioned the coats of the birds and the four-footed creatures that they blend with the friendly shadows.

“Go into the woods and sit perfectly still for half an hour and see what a change will come.

“Perhaps your first caller is a little brown bird who will come fluttering down through the boughs to get a better look at you.

“Then the wood mouse will slip slyly out of his den at the root of a tree and peep curiously.

“Soon you may hear a pitter-patter in the leaves. That is a squirrel; it may be a weasel, but it is more likely to be a squirrel. If the noise is more like a strut than a pitter-patter, it is a partridge and it may be feeding, looking here and there in the ends of rotten logs and stumps for grubs.

“If the sounds are further apart and more uneven, it is probably a rabbit. The steady trot, trot, trot, of a fox is always easy to recognize.

“It is as easy to recognize these little foot-falls in the woods, once you have learned them, as it is to tell the step of your father or mother in your own home.”

“Don’t you ever get deceived, Ben?” I asked. For to me nearly all the sounds in the woods were merely noises, although I recognized most of the bird songs and their call notes.

“Oh, yes, even the best ear is deceived sometimes,” replied Ben, “but you must learn in the woods to hear or see a little part of the truth and supply the rest.

"Then you will know that these gray and brown streaks that you occasionally see flitting across the path, or just gliding behind some bush, are not fancies but real living creatures, all eyes, ears and noses and quivering with alertness. Then every time that a twig snaps, brake rustles, or a bough bends you will know what it means.

"It is little things and not large ones in the woods that tell the wonderful story of nature's secret. Any one can follow a track in the new snow, but only the trained trailer can follow it upon bare ground.

"The things the trailer sees you would pass by as unimportant. It may be a broken twig, some moss brushed off a log, a bit of bark from a tree, but these little things tell which way the trail leads."

"Looks to me a good deal like finding a needle in a haymow," I ventured.

Ben laughed. "It used to seem so to me," he said cheerily, "but you see I am an old man, and you are only a small boy. All things come to him who waits, and a boy can

learn much by keeping his eyes and ears open."

That evening after supper we piled our camp fire high with dry limbs that I had gathered for the purpose, and old Ben told me camp fire tales until all thoughts of sleep left me and I was as wide awake as an owl.

Finally, he turned in and I sat there in the cheerful firelight with my back against an old log listening to the pleasant night sounds and thinking of what a wonderful place the forest was, now I was learning to love it.

The great pines, upon the bluff back of the camp, sighed mournfully and the night winds answered them in low soughing tones.

Far away in the woods a fox barked his sharp, short bark. The great horned owl sounded his hunting cry and then listened for the prey to betray its whereabouts. A little screech owl whistled shrilly and a tree frog took up the same strain. The tree frog's song was still trembling in my ears when I fell asleep beside the camp fire and dreamed a terrible dream.

I was a hunter in the African jungles and was lying by my camp fire asleep when a huge lion began creeping slowly upon me, intent upon devouring me or carrying me off into the jungle alive.

I was powerless to move or cry out and the lion drew nearer and nearer.

The horror of the situation caused me to wake to what seemed to me quite as bad a plight as that in my dream.

I was not an African lion hunter, that was plain, but only a terribly scared small boy who had fallen asleep in the woods. The camp fire had gone out and there was nothing ominous in that, but there was another consideration and here was the difficulty.

A mighty animal, probably a bear, was standing guard over me. I could see the outline of the massive head against the sky, the glow of two large yellow eyes, and could feel the hot breath of the beast upon my face.

Then I remembered dozens of horrible stories that I had read, of how wild creatures

stood above sleeping hunters until they awoke or moved, when they sprang upon them and tore them to bits.

My tongue grew parched and clove to the roof of my mouth. My heart beat so hard that I knew the bear must hear it, and a chill like ice water stole down my back.

Probably I lay like this for five seconds, then a stratagem came to me which terror helped me put into execution.

Our camp was on a side hill and the entrance of the tent was below me. With a sudden motion I rolled over and over towards the tent door, and at the same time I gave a yell that made the vocal attempts of the great horned owl seem like whispers.

Over and over I spun like a top until I struck fairly upon the bunk, bringing Ben to his feet as though steel springs had been under him.

"Land of Liberty, Harry, what is it, night-horse?" That was what Ben called nightmare.

"A bear in camp, a bear," I gasped with

just breath enough left to give the information.

We could hear some large animal tumbling about our dishes and sniffing hungrily.

"Don't sound to me exactly like a bear," said Ben in his ordinary tone of voice.

"Ben, Ben, keep still," I gasped, "we haven't any gun."

Ben chuckled. "I'm not afraid of bears," he said. "This is a good, kind bear, Harry.

"Come here, bear," he continued snapping his fingers and uttering a low whistle.

A great brute as large as a yearling calf came bounding into the tent and with a yell of terror I dove into a corner behind Ben.

"Now, Harry, stop screeching and let me introduce you to this good, kind bear. His name is Ponto, and he wants to kiss you. What a long tail he has for a bear!"

I uncovered my eyes and beheld Ponto, a great Newfoundland dog belonging to one of our neighbors.

"You see you will have to study forest

“footfalls a little more, Harry,” chuckled Ben as he smoothed Ponto’s coat; “then you will be able to tell a mastadon from a field mouse when it comes into camp.”

CHAPTER XV.
IN THE HUNTER'S MOON.

CHAPTER XV

In the Hunter's Moon

OF all the seasons of the year that make the heart glad, I know of none better than October, the time of the Hunter's Moon, the season of fulfillment.

Then all the promises of springtime have been redeemed; then all the treasures of nature are poured into the lap of the glad earth and man has but to eat, drink and be merry.

Then the corn is stacked in the field, a thousand Indian wigwams with golden pumpkins gleaming in between. The barn is fragrant with the new hay. Granaries are full to overflowing with all the treasures of Ceres, while Pomona's gifts hang bright red, yellow, and green, in all the loaded orchards.

Even better than these are the walnut and chestnut groves, with hair-raising climbs into

the tops of tall trees for the treasure of the forest.

The cranberry bog, too, is bright with berries, and here one may not only pick berries, but also watch the muskrats piling up their houses against the winter cold, which will soon be upon them.

The muskrat is particularly fortunate, for he not only lives in this queer house, but also eats it, for it is partly built of the roots that he best likes.

On these wonderful autumn nights, when the sky was so studded with stars that there seemed not room for one more, when the air was rich with the smell of the ripe corn, and the perfume of ripe fruit, old Ben and I used to take long night walks, and it was then that we did about the only hunting that we ever permitted ourselves.

Old Ben's philosophy in regard to the wild life was that each creature, and even the bugs and insects, although many of them seemed worse than useless to us, had their use. That they were put here for some purpose, and that

we spoiled the plan of nature when we attempted to exterminate any of them.

He greatly astonished me one day by saying that there were not twenty-five per cent. as many song and game birds as there had been twenty years before, and that it was costing the government and the farmer nearly a billion dollars a year in loss of crops, fighting insects that had multiplied so rapidly since the birds had been depleted and could not longer keep these pests down.

"Hunt vermin, Harry, if you must hunt," he would say, "and let the rest of God's creatures alone."

One autumn the raccoons became so plentiful and did so much damage upon my father's farm, that old Ben declared them vermin for the time being, and we had some famous hunts, although we got but one raccoon all the autumn.

We did not so much mind if the raccoons did make holes in the sides of the pumpkins, scooping out the seeds and eating them, or if they came into the garden and made sad work

in the vegetables, or ate sweet apples. They had to live and there was enough for both us and them, but when they visited our hen coops and killed a dozen fine pullets in a single night, even old Ben's anger was aroused, and he and I declared war upon the raccoons.

Ben's old fox hound Bugler was a famous raccoon dog, and together with a dog borrowed from a neighbor, made up our pack.

We would keep the dogs in the leash, and go with them to all the neighboring cornfields. We would circle entirely around each field and would usually find a fresh raccoon track that the dogs were all eagerness to follow.

There were several reasons why we did not get any coons. Sometimes they climbed such large trees that we could not cut them down or climb them. Often they holed in the ledges near by, where we could not dig them out, while frequently the dogs would lose the scent after going a short distance, or Bugler would strike a fox track, and leave the raccoon for a fox, which he considered better worth while.

One hunt that we had I shall never forget. Thoughts of it even now make my hair rise on my head, for it was only old Ben's wonderful alertness and presence of mind that saved me a terrible scratching from a bobcat.

On the particular night to which I refer we had a varied experience, and one that filled the evening with thrills enough to satisfy even the mind of a boy.

First, the dogs took a fresh trail at the edge of my father's cornfield, and went off at a brisk pace. They soon holed the coon in those same ledges that had given us so much trouble, and we had to try again.

After keeping the dogs upon a leash for an hour and not starting another raccoon we let them go, and they were presently barking briskly in a deep swamp.

Soon we heard some large animal coming rapidly towards us, and were all excitement.

"That is no coon, Harry," said Ben under his breath. "Keep your eyes open, boy."

Ben cocked his rifle, and stood listening and watching. I strained my eyes in the

direction of the sound, but could make out nothing.

Presently there was a rush of feet which seemed to come immediately towards us, and before I had the faintest idea of what game was afoot, a beautiful doe, with a little dappled fawn, stood panting at the edge of the bright rim of light cast by our lanterns.

For a full minute they stood gazing wide-eyed and spellbound at the strange brightness, just as they will at a jack.

The fawn crowded close to its dam, and gazed up at her with an inquiring look, but the doe kept her terror-wide eyes fixed upon the light of our lantern, as though her life depended upon holding it with her gaze.

It was a wonderful picture and one that I shall never forget.

The bright patch of light, like a picture frame, and the two beautiful heads at its centre.

Then the dogs came out of the swamp into the open, with a great baying and the doe and fawn fled precipitately, going at such a break-

neck pace that it would seem as though they must break their legs, for it was quite dark on this particular evening.

Ben explained after we had caught the dogs that a deer had a wonderful faculty for running in the dark, even through thick timber, and that he had never seen but one deer with a broken leg.

We took the dogs away for a mile in the opposite direction from that in which the deer had fled, before letting them go.

Once more they took to the deep swamp, and soon they were baying away again in an excited manner.

As the sounds came from one spot and the dogs did not seem to be moving, Ben said that something out of the ordinary was up. He said it did not sound like "Up a Tree," and he did not know what to make of it.

Five minutes of floundering about over dead logs and stepping in deep holes which we could not avoid, and we came up with the dogs.

They were dancing about a queer looking

object, very much excited, but seemed to be rather afraid of their game.

At the sight Ben rushed forward and began whipping the dogs back with a switch that he broke from a near-by bush.

In the dim light I could not just make out what the queer game was, but Ben shouted, "It's a porcupine, Harry. We came just in time to save the dogs."

"Would he eat them?" I asked in my ignorance.

Ben laughed. "Worse than that," he replied. "He would fill them full of quills."

Then I went up close and we examined the queer fellow to our hearts' content.

I had never seen a porcupine before, a hedgehog being the nearest approach that I had known to this wonderful wilderness freak.

The hedgehog is first cousin to the porcupine, but much smaller.

This specimen that Ben and I were examining would weigh twenty-five pounds and was covered with quills three or four inches long. Ben told me that they were barbed, so

that if they once entered an object they could not easily be pulled out, but would travel until they came out at the other side.

The porcupine lay flat down upon the ground to protect his belly, where there were not so many quills.

"Now watch, Harry," cried Ben, and he poked at the place where the tail should have been, for Mr. Porcupine did not seem to have any tail.

Quick as a flash the tail shot out, and two quills stuck in the end of the stick. "That is what would have happened to the dogs," explained Ben. "For all he looks so harmless this is one of the worst fellows in the woods for a dog to tackle."

We found a hollow log and poked Mr. Porcupine into it, and then partially plugged up the end. "That will keep him snug until the dogs forget about him," explained Ben; "we will let him out to-morrow."

This swamp seemed fated so we took the dogs away to a maple sugar bush, which was a fine place for raccoons.

They soon started what we thought a coon, and were almost immediately barking "Up a Tree."

Ben and I hurried to the spot, all excitement.

That evening while we had been hunting for our first raccoon track, Ben had been lecturing me upon the importance of always being upon the alert in the woods, and especially of the necessity for instant obedience.

All the wilderness babies have to obey instantly. Their lives depend upon it. So man when he goes into the woods must be alert, and it is always well for a boy to obey his elders when he is in the woods without stopping to ask questions.

One of the great dangers, especially when in a district where timber has been recently cut, is from limbs that lodge in the tops of trees when adjacent trees are felled.

These limbs will often fall without a second's warning and strike a man down. More lumber jacks are hurt in this way than in any other.

I listened attentively while Ben talked, but did not imagine that we would so soon have a demonstration of the wisdom of my guide's remarks.

On hurrying to the spot where the dogs had brought to bay our supposed raccoon we discovered that it was not in a very high tree, and our hopes rose high as we thought we would be sure of this coon.

Ben began circling about trying to locate the raccoon, at the same time throwing sticks and stones into the top of the tree.

Suddenly there was a sharp rustle in the branches, and then old Ben's voice rang out in a sharp command, "Jump, Harry, jump."

I had just been pondering his remarks about quick obedience in the woods, so without waiting to ask why, I sprang ahead, turning to look over my shoulder as I jumped.

What I saw in mid-air above me made me follow up my first spring with two more, much longer and more hurried, for there just above my head was a large, dark object, with

two gleaming eyes, the fierceness of which seemed to freeze the blood in my veins.

I also imagined that I could see extended claws, and the mouth of the creature wide open ready to take a piece out of the back of my neck.

Just as the animal struck the ground Ben's rifle (old Kentucky) cracked, and an enormous bay lynx stretched out dead almost at our very feet.

Then when it was all over, I turned white as a sheet, and my knees shook so that I could hardly stand.

"That was a pretty close call, Harry," cried Ben. "I didn't suppose that my lesson on instant obedience would be demonstrated so soon, but you can't ever tell in the woods. We must always be ready."

We tied the great cat to a pole and carried it home between us, and were well satisfied with that night's raccoon hunt.

But all the way home I kept looking over my shoulder, half expecting to see another lynx bearing down upon me from the upper air.



TURNING TO LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER AS I JUMPED



CHAPTER XVI
A WINTER WALK



CHAPTER XVI

A Winter Walk

ONE afternoon late in December Ben and I tied on our snowshoes and went for a tramp.

Although it was only December, there had been several heavy snows, with some sharp freezes, so that the old earth had the appearance of midwinter.

It was fine snowshoeing, there being just crust enough to hold us up so that we glided along easily.

"It has always been a wonder to me," said Ben, as we shuffled along, "how the wild creatures can take such good care of themselves in the extreme cold.

"A tiny field mouse or a bit of a woodpecker can keep warm and provide for their daily wants where you and I would freeze and starve.

"Where do you imagine the meadow mice are now, Harry?"

"I don't know," I replied. "I should think they would have a hard time of it."

"Not at all, not at all," replied Ben. "They are as snug as 'a bug in a rug' in their endless winding tunnels under the grass roots. The deep snow that looks so cold only serves to keep them warm."

"A meadow mouse doesn't have to keep to four or five rooms in the winter, as you or I do. He has got a dozen pantries and a dozen dining-rooms in his tunnels underground, and sitting-room and bedroom with each. He can travel also if he has a mind to in his winding tunnels."

"So all he has got to do is to eat, sleep and be merry, while you and I have to saw and split the wood and do a dozen other chores."

"The field mouse and the wood mouse are just as snug, and they go abroad more even than their cousins of the meadows."

"You will often see their dainty tracks in the snow about the roots of a tree, or near

some wall. It is such a lacework pattern that you will never mistake it.

“It is almost as much of a mystery how the fox survives when we remember that his principal article of diet, in the seasons when the ground is not covered with snow, is mice. He rarely catches any in the winter, although he occasionally digs down to the grass and tries his luck.

“Nearly all the other small game upon which he relies in the summer is now denned up, and Mr. Fox has to sharpen his wits or go hungry.

“But he is a clever fellow and will get his dinner in some way, where more stupid animals would starve.

“I am afraid, even as it is, that he would often go hungry if it were not for the poor rabbit, who is food for both bird and beast, and probably the most widely hunted creature that runs on four legs.

“The hawk, the owl, the weasel, the wild-cat, the lynx, the fisher, and last, but not least, Sly Reynard, all dine on the poor rabbit, and

if he did not multiply so rapidly, he would soon become extinct.

"Now, Harry, what do you make of the big bunch of leaves away up in the top of that tall maple at the edge of the woods?"

"It looks like a crow's nest," I replied, "but I guess it isn't anything but just some leaves that have lodged in that crotch."

"Mighty queer that so many should have lodged in just that way," replied Ben. "I guess it is a squirrel's hammock and that one and perhaps two sleek grayers are tucked away in that swinging cradle so that every wind that blows will rock them in their sleep."

"Some of the grayers den up in hollow trees, while others who are more fanciful build themselves a veritable cradle in the treetop. They take short sticks and place them in a triangular shape where limbs fork out, and then begin filling in the middle of the triangle with leaves."

"Then they build on more sticks and fill up with more leaves until they have a bunch as

large as a bushel basket. When this is done they dig a hole from the lower side into the middle of this nest. The hole is always on the lee side of the nest so that they will not get the wind. There they sleep, while the wind rocks their cradle.

“In the same manner a porcupine will crawl up to the very top of a slight tree and let the wind rock him to sleep. He hasn’t any fear either that he will forget himself and let go when he is napping. About the only thing his feet have ever been taught is to hold on.

“Here we are at the rabbit swamp. Now we will have to take off our snowshoes and wallow.”

It was not so much fun treading our way through the laurel as it had been scuffling along on the top of the snow. Occasionally, I would catch my toe under a root or in a tangle of underbrush, and down I would go. Once in a while, I would step in some deep hole that the snow had covered up and would go in almost to my armpits; then Ben would

pull me out, and we would both have a good laugh at my expense.

"Here is the rabbit's main street through his village," said Ben, winding about through the laurel. "Here on each side are the avenues and the other side streets and leading off from them are the paths leading up to Mr. Rabbit's front door. Perhaps Mr. Rabbit's house is a nest under three feet of snow beneath a bunch of laurel roots, or maybe it is an old burrow; in either case he keeps as mum about it as he can. He doesn't keep his card tacked up to tell the other wild creatures where he lives."

"Why not?" I asked. "I should think he would want his friends to know where he lived."

"So he would if he had any, other than rabbit friends," replied Ben, "but his acquaintances outside the rabbit family are mostly enemies. If it is near a stream the mink will come and try to find what number Mr. Rabbit's house is.

"The weasel will also try to catch him

asleep, while half a dozen others will try to catch him outside his house.

"See that old yellow birch stub at the edge of the swamp?" asked Ben.

I saw it and remarked that it did not look very interesting.

"There you are wrong, boy. Dead trees are always more interesting than live ones when you are out looking for the wild folk. One old dead maple stump standing in the middle of the cow pasture is worth a whole grove of ordinary maples.

"Now, that old birch stump was the home of a family of raccoons last year, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were sleeping there now. You see, Harry, the raccoon is the little brother of the bear. He walks like a bear, he acts like a bear, and his face looks very much like a bear's. He likes many of the things that a bear eats; in fact, he is a real little bear, although he has a long ringed tail and is considered only a raccoon."

We went over to the birch stump and

Ben pointed out fresh scratches that some animal had made by climbing the tree recently.

"There is another point where he resembles the bear; he always backs down out of his front door as Bruin does. Ten to one, Harry, there are three or four fat coons in there asleep at this very moment."

"There is one thing that I don't understand, Ben," I said, as we again put on our snowshoes and tramped on through the open hard wood.

"When I go into the woods alone there don't seem to be so very many things to see, although I see more than I used to, but when I go with you every old stump contains something."

Ben chuckled. "Does seem as though I had the street and number for all the wild folk down in my head, doesn't it? Well, I haven't at all. I just have to look for things like other people. A great many of the things that I show you I have spent days and weeks looking for. The secrets of the woods don't

come easy, and that is why they are worth trying to discover.

“Did you ever stop to think where all the woodpeckers are keeping themselves in the winter? They don’t migrate, that is, not many of them. The golden woodpecker, or flicker, does, but we still have the hairy, the downy, the red-crest, and the yellow-bellied sap-sucker. You will see them all on warm days.

“In the autumn these woodpeckers pick out winter quarters in the trees, and that is why you so often hear pounding in the fall. They make the winter nest larger and more commodious than the spring one but Mr. and Mrs. Woodpecker each have a nest, usually in different trees. In fact, I can’t see that the pairing woodpeckers have very much to do with one another, once their young are reared.

“The yellow-bellied sap-sucker enjoys the winter, especially the latter part of it, more than all the other woodpeckers put together, for it is his special time of harvest.

“As soon as sap will run, Mr. Yellow-Belly picks out a maple that he knows contains sweet sap, and goes up and down the trunk drilling small holes through the bark and into the wood. These holes are slanted down so that when the sap flows they will fill. By the time Mr. Yellow-Belly has drilled his fiftieth hole, the first is full of sap, and all the rogue has to do now is to travel up and down the trunk of the tree drinking out of his sap wells. He will sometimes spend nearly the whole of a warm March day drinking sap.

“Now we are coming to some queer looking country. It is the edge of Great Bear Swamp, but we are not going to penetrate it.”

It was a wild-looking, desolate piece of land, scantily wooded with small willows, birches, both white and yellow, and dotted here and there with a thick clump of spruce. The land was evidently rather moist and was altogether as desolate a spot as I had ever seen.

“I don’t see what we came here for, Ben,” I said. “We can’t see much here, unless it

is an occasional rabbit track. It is about as lonesome a place as ever I saw."

"It is a lonesome spot," replied Ben, "but those are just the places that the wild creatures like. They are not so fond of man's society as you might imagine."

"But I guess you will see other than rabbit tracks here. Tracks are just what I came here to show you."

Ben was right, as usual. In a few moments we came upon the greatest jumble of tracks that I have ever seen. They ran in every direction, but most of them kept to well-beaten paths.

"What in the world is this, Ben?" I cried, all excitement. "It doesn't look like anything I have ever seen. Seems as though a lot of sheep had been playing fox and geese."

"That is a pretty fair guess, Harry," said Ben. "They do look a little like sheep or calf tracks, but that is not what it is. It is a deer yard."

"A deer yard!" I exclaimed, looking my astonishment.

Ben laughed. "You see, when the deep snow comes the deer is in a bad fix. With his small cutting hoof he isn't built for traveling in the snow. So he remedies the difficulty by making himself winter quarters.

"The deer always plan their yard so that it shall include plenty of birch, maple and willow browse, and so that they can get to a spring or brook.

"Of course, if the water fails they eat snow, but they much prefer water."

"Ben," I cried, all excitement, "let's run them up into one corner of the yard where we can see them."

My companion laughed. "I guess you would find that quite an undertaking. This yard extends nearly around Bear Swamp, and it probably contains a dozen or fifteen deer. The yard is now doubtless several miles in extent, but it will be much smaller as the winter advances.

"The deer will find it too hard work to keep it all broken out, after the deep snows

come, so they will give up a large part of it and narrow down to a hundred acres.

"I found the deer browsing not far from here the other day and perhaps we may see them if we have luck.

"Deer are very wary. Their scent is of the keenest, and their hearing is about as good. The wind is in our favor, however, and that is worth a good deal."

Spite of all we could do, our snowshoes made quite a noise crunching upon the crust, but, as Ben said, the wind was in our favor, and that would also carry the noise as well as our scent away from the deer.

We crept cautiously forward for about forty rods.

Finally we came out on the brow of a slight hill which was quite thickly covered with scrub spruces.

Here we crept along from tree to tree, nicely screened by the dark green plumes.

Ben was the first to reach the brow of the hill and peer down into the valley beyond.

When he had done so he turned to me and, putting his finger on his lips as a sign to keep very quiet, he lifted his other hand and wiggled his forefinger.

I knew the sign and was overjoyed. Ben had told me that to all tribes of the American Indians and to trappers and hunters, the world over, the wiggling of the index finger meant, "deer near at hand," as it is supposed to imitate the wiggling of the deer's tail when feeding.

I crept forward to Ben's side and peered in the direction that he indicated.

Beneath us was a warm, sheltered valley several acres in extent thickly dotted with small birches and here and there a clump of spruce. The rays of the setting sun fell aslant through the birches, causing their trunks to shine like silver, in strong contrast to the dark green of the spruce. The long shadows from the evergreens fell across the valley like somber bars.

The snow sparkled and glistened and twigs that were snow-laden glittered like diamonds.

The sun stood on the distant hilltop, gilding it with crimson and golden streaks.

There, in this wonderful setting of valley and hilltop, of light and shadow, were five feeding deer.

A tall, stately buck was holding down a young birch while he browsed contentedly.

Two does were nibbling at some branches already broken down, while two fawns, who by this time had nearly lost their dappled markings, were standing close to the doe's flanks, as though for warmth and protection.

I hardly dared to breathe lest by some magic the picture should fade away and be lost. I had barely taken in all the details of this wonderful scene when there was a strong puff of wind at our backs.

"Wind has shifted, Harry," whispered Ben. "Now watch them."

The whisper had barely died upon his lips when the buck threw up his head, snorted and stamped as though half belligerent and half terrified. Then there was another strong puff of wind and he stamped and snorted

again, this time giving a short whistle, which sounded like blowing in a bottle.

At this signal the two feeding does sprang to his side, closely followed by the fawns, and the five deer stood in a close bunch wide-eyed and fearful. Their heads held high in the air, and their nostrils distended, their every sense was strained to catch the slightest sound or scent.

Again the wind blew strong at our backs, and this time there was no mistaking the taint. With a snort of terror the buck wheeled and led the wild procession at a breakneck pace across the valley and over the distant hilltop.

In fewer seconds than it takes to tell it, the gloom had swallowed them and the magic of the few fleeting moments was broken.

How suddenly the scene changed. Almost in a twinkling the long purple shadows turned to black, the sun disappeared from the distant hilltops, and only a blood red spot showed where the horizon had been warm and glowing a minute before.



HE STAMPED AND SNORTED AGAIN, THIS TIME
GIVING A SHORT WHISTLE

In a second the thermometer seemed to have fallen a dozen degrees and the wind whistled dismally in the leafless treetops.

I shivered and turned up my coat collar. "Let's go home, Ben," I said. "There isn't any more fun for us in the woods to-day."

Without a word Ben turned and led the way and the rhythmic, mournful creak of our snowshoes made a fitting accompaniment to my thoughts.

How cold, how cheerless, how desolate, the old world, that had seemed so bright and cheerful a few moments before, had grown. The warmth, the life, the joy was all gone out of it. How relentless and cold was the biting wind and frost, and how unmindful of all the wild creatures that in some miraculous way must feed themselves and keep warm until spring came.

"Harry," said Ben, as we came out into the road just above the barn, "I'll bet I can show you something in your own barn that you don't know is there."

"I'll bet you can't," I replied. "You may

know the woods, Ben, but there isn't a crack or corner in the old barn that I don't know."

"Let's see," replied Ben.

We went to the barn door and Ben began a high-keyed, tremulous whistle, as mournful as a dirge.

To my great surprise it was answered in the same key from somewhere upon the big beams. Again Ben whistled and again the answer. Then there was a sudden flapping of wings and a bird about the size of a quail flapped down almost into our faces, hovered for a moment before us as though to inspect us and then flapped back into the dark.

It was a chunky brown bird, with a catlike head and a very hooked beak, but I had never seen it in the barn before.

"It's a little barn owl," said Ben. "I discovered him whistling here when I came by this afternoon, and I imagined that he had taken up winter quarters in the barn."

"You can almost always make one of those little screechers fly down at you by imitating his whistle. It seems to anger him to hear

any one else whistling his own particular tune.

“Good-night, Harry. We will try and stalk the deer again some day, but you’ll never see a prettier picture than we saw to-day, if you tramp the woods until you are as old as I am.”

CHAPTER XVII
CAMP FIRE LEGENDS OF THE
WOOD FOLKS



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Camp Fire Legends of the Wood Folks

PROBABLY the most delightful of all the camp fires beside which old Ben told stories, while I listened with wide open eyes, was that of the sugar bush on a March night.

It really was not a camp fire at all, but the wonderful blaze in the great arch, above which the sap danced and steamed in the four-barrel pan.

Any boy who has not boiled sap on a March night with old Ben or some other good companion does not know what he has missed.

When there has been a great flow of sap and all the storage hogsheads in camp are full to overflowing, then it is necessary to boil night and day, to make room for the next run, and here it is that the boy who is not afraid of the dark, or the howling of the

boisterous wind in the treetops, gets a whole lot of fun.

I was always glad for these extra flows of sap in our camp, for although it made back-breaking work, I knew that each evening I should see Ben's lantern come swinging down the road, and a moment later I should hear him shouting for me in the yard.

There is so much mystery about a lantern out of doors at night, and the shadows are so fearful that the whole gives just the right mixture of adventure.

Arrived at the camp Ben would refill the sap pan from the mighty storage hogsheads, fill the arch with snapping pine and spruce logs, and then spread blankets before the cheerful blaze, and we were ready for the winter camp fire stories. Of course Ben had to fill his pipe and puff away solemnly for a few moments before we were really off.

"Did I ever tell you how it was that the honey-bee got its sting?" he asked one night.

"No," I replied, "please tell me." Ben settled back against a log in a comfortable

position, pulled steadily at his pipe for a few seconds and then began.

“Well, it was this way. Years and years ago, when the world was sort of new, as you might say, the bees and the wasps didn’t have any stingers. There are honey-bees now in the tropics that don’t have any, but in those days none of them had stingers. Well, there was a swarm of bees that lived in an old hollow rock maple. They were strong, swift flyers, and very industrious. They had lived in the old maple for several years, and for ten feet, up and down, the hollow tree was filled with wonderful honey. It was a very large swarm, probably sixty thousand bees.

“Well, the tree that they lived in was standing at a slant. It had been partly blown over, and had lodged against other trees. The hole where the bees entered the tree was on the under side, so the rain didn’t beat in, and it was shaded in summer; altogether it was a fine home for the bees.

“The tree had been struck by lightning some time before they found it, and the bark

had all peeled off. The rains and the winds had polished the wood until it was as smooth as finished ebony.

“One day a bee who was smarter than all her fellows had an idea. She had seen an otter sliding down a slippery clay bank, having the finest kind of a time, so it occurred to her that perhaps bees could do something similar. She probably never would have tried it, though, if she hadn’t noticed what a fine slide could be had upon the bowl of the old maple that was so hard and smooth. So she buzzed up to the top of the smooth place and pulled her feet up under her, and folded her wings. Then she pushed off.

“Down she went in a splendid coast, and when she reached the bottom, she just spread her wings and soared off into the air, flying back to the starting place. It was just like a boy with a new toy. The more she slid the better she liked it. Finally other bees noticed what she was doing and they tried it. More and more bees came to try the new sport until at last there were hundreds sliding down

the smoother side of the old maple. Finally, the queen bee noticed that they were not coming in with honey as they should be and she came to a crack in the tree and peeped out to see what was the matter.

“The queen at once put an end to the sport for that day by sending them all off for honey, but the sport got so popular that the queen had to make a rule that the bees should not slide down hill, until they had made so many trips to the flowers for honey. After that, the bees would hurry about their work so that they could get a chance to slide.

“Finally, one day a bee discovered another partly fallen tree in the woods and stopped gathering honey to slide upon it. But this tree was not smooth like the first, and before the bee knew what had happened, she had stuck a sharp splinter in her tail. This made it impossible for her to slide any more and it pained her. All of which she thought was punishment for not gathering honey when she ought and leaving the play until later.

“When she got home the rest of the bees all made sport of her with the splinter in her tail, until at last in sheer desperation she gave one of them a severe thrust with the tail, which was now doubly sharp. The afflicted bee soon discovered that the new tail was a great weapon of defense, and none of the bees dared to tease her after that.

“But her weapon was not perfect until she had dipped it in poison, which she got from a poison plant.

“One day, soon after the bee had poisoned her tail, a meddlesome boy came poking about the tree. He soon discovered the hole where the bees entered, and began throwing stones at it.

“‘I will teach him a lesson,’ said the bee with the poison tail. ‘Now you just keep your eyes on that boy and see the fun.’

“Zip, went the bee like a bullet, and she struck the boy fairly on the end of the nose, driving her poison splinter deep into the flesh.

“The boy gave a howl that you could have heard for a quarter of a mile and started for

home as though all the bears that came after the bad boys who sauced Elisha had been after him. But pretty soon his nose began to swell, and how it did smart and ache! When he got home to his mother, it was twice its normal size, and he was a comical sight. But the bee who had stung him had been so injured by having the splinter pulled from her tail that she died. That is the penalty that they pay for stinging to this day. The honey-bee who stings you always dies in the act.

“When the other bees saw the boy jump and clap his hands over his nose, and heard the terrible yell that he gave, they were so tickled that they all vowed then and there that they would fix their tails just like the bee who had stung the boy. So the following day nearly the whole swarm went to the rough tree, of which the bee with a stinger had told them, and slid down it until each had a splinter in her tail. Then all went to the poison plant and poisoned their splinters, and the whole hive were as well armed as the first bee had been.

“After that, men and animals became so afraid of the bees that they left them very much alone, and they were happier and more powerful than they had been before.

“When these bees with the poison tails came to hatch little new bees, it was discovered that the new bees had inherited the poison tail, which greatly delighted the queen and all the swarm.

“The bees with the poison tail who lived in the old hollow maple were so much better able to take care of themselves that all the old kind soon died out, until to-day all the bees in these parts have the stinger, as bears and boys and men can testify.”

“That’s a fine story, Ben,” I said at the conclusion of the tale. “Can’t you think of another?”

Ben refilled his pipe and pulled away at it thoughtfully for a few moments, then said:

“Don’t think I ever told you how it was that the snake changes his suit every year. Perhaps that would interest you.

“Well, when the snake went into the

Garden of Eden and tempted Eve there isn't any account of his going on his belly. I can't just say what his manner of traveling was. Perhaps he walked on the end of his tail, but if he did, he was a pretty good balancer.

"When God saw what the snake had done, how he had tempted Eve, got her to eat of the tree of knowledge, and broke up the whole plan of Eden, God said to the snake, 'Henceforth you shall go upon your belly and be hated and bruised by men.'

"So the snake got down on his belly and wriggled out of Eden, feeling that he had sorter 'cooked his goose,' as you might say.

"At first he didn't mind it so much, for he could go creeping about in the grass very still and scare people, especially Eve and her daughters, making them scream and run. This was great fun for the snake and he would nearly split with laughter each time.

"But he soon found that there were great disadvantages in having to crawl on one's belly. In the first place, he could not go fast; in the second place, he could not see off and

know when his enemies were coming; but, worst of all, it wore out his clothes.

“ Why, that snake hadn’t been going on his belly for three months before his pants were out at the knees, and he had scraped off all his vest buttons, while his coat was in tatters and so ragged that he could hardly keep it on.

“ This greatly injured the snake’s vanity, for he had a fine mottled suit of which he had been very proud before his fall.

“ Finally his clothes got to looking so bad that he hardly dared to show himself, not even to scare Eve and her daughters, which had been his chief delight. Instead, he slunk about in dark corners and lost his appetite for frogs.

“ Finally he got so blue about it that he decided to go and tell the Wood Nymph his troubles and see if anything could be done for his case.

“ ‘ Dear Wood Nymph, kind friend of all living creatures,’ he began, ‘ I am in great trouble. Ever since the day that I got those silly bipeds to eat the apple, I have had to

go on my belly and my suit is getting so threadbare that I cannot appear in company any more. Besides, it no longer protects my under skin, which is sensitive, and is already quite sore with scraping along the ground. If something cannot be done for me, I shall soon be entirely worn out.'

"When the Wood Nymph saw the snake's sorrow, although he was an ugly, wriggling, hissing thing, her heart was touched, for she knew that everything that God has made is of use and has its place.

" 'Mr. Snake,' she said, 'I am grieved for you. It was a sorry joke that you played in the Garden, and we cannot see when it will ever end, but I know your nature and your weakness, and will not judge you too harshly. You will have to go on your belly for the rest of your days as God has commanded; there is no help for that; but this much I will do for you. Each year when your old suit is worn out, I will give you a new one. When the old suit is entirely worn out, if you will wriggle and twist and writhe, you will find

that it will come off, and under it there will be a fine new suit. But the style and color of the suit will always be the same, so that people may know you and keep out of your way.'

"When the snake heard this, he was as glad as a boy with a new kite, and at once went off into the grass to try and discover if the Wood Nymph had spoken the truth, for, being a great liar himself, he was suspicious of other people. So the snake wriggled, and writhed and twisted until his skin came off, and there under it, just as the Wood Nymph had said, was a new suit.

"Then the snake lay in the sun to let his new suit dry and harden, and when it was dried, he went about his business a happier snake than he had been for many a week.

"Speaking of how the snake sheds his skin," continued Ben, "reminds me of how Red Buck loses his antlers each spring. No matter how proudly he has been stepping about a few hours before, suddenly his glory falls, and he is left as hornless as a doe.

“Then in three or four weeks, some bunches appear where the horns were, and these bunches are the new horns just beginning to grow. The horns are composed of lime which comes from the deer’s blood. Right at the base of the horns is a large artery which constantly feeds the new growth with blood, and this blood gradually deposits the hard substance that makes horn.

“While the buck is getting his new horns, he has troubles enough of his own, and so does not make any for others of the wood folks.

“The new horns are covered with a soft substance which is called velvet, and you will often see where the buck has rubbed it off against a tree. At this time of year, the new horns are sensitive and have to be continually rubbed. This is also to harden them, and get them in shape so that the red buck can fight his enemies, which are usually other bucks.

“It is very strange that the deer family should grow such splendid horns only to drop them in the late winter. The antlers of the

Alaskan moose sometimes weigh ninety or a hundred pounds, and are six feet across.

“ According to one of my camp fire legends, Harry, Red Buck didn’t use to drop his horns each year, but they were taken away from him as a punishment, just to keep him from being too high and mighty.

“ In those old days, when he kept his horns for the entire year, he got to be so high stepping, and so combative that there was no peace for any one. He would even charge the rabbits and foxes, or anything that came his way. Often the spirit of combat was so strong within him that he would butt his own mate about, and he finally got so that he occasionally killed his own fawn, especially if the fawn happened to be a buck.

“ At last he got so bad that all the wood folks, including Red Buck’s mate, went to the Wood Nymph and made complaint against him. Mrs. Red Buck was loath to do this, but she really could not stand having her fawns killed.

“ When the good Wood Nymph heard all

this, and especially how Red Buck had killed his offspring, she looked very grieved, and her heart was full of trouble. She was kind and gentle herself, and she wished all the wood folks to be the same. Of course some of them had to kill others for food, and this was expected, but to kill one's own relations in this way was too much.

“‘Red Buck shall be punished,’ said the Wood Nymph when she had heard all the complaints. ‘I have made him too beautiful, and have given him too large and too strong a set of antlers, but I cannot take them away from him entirely, for that will leave him defenseless. He must still have some weapon with which to fight the battle of life.’

“It was a very vexing question, and for a long time the Wood Nymph did not know what to do, but she finally decided to take down Red Buck's pride by taking away his horns for a part of the year, leaving him hornless only for that portion of the year when he needs them the least.

“So every year, a few weeks before the new

fawns come, the proud buck loses his horns. Then his pride leaves him, and he goes away into the deep woods and nurses his new horns until they are quite well grown, and it is not until he has polished and rubbed them for several months that they are ready for the battle."

"That is a good story, Ben," I said when he had finished, "but I guess it is a make-believe."

"You ask the buck if losing his horns is a make-believe, and I think he will tell you quite different."

"You don't know how it was that the partridge learned to drum, Ben?" I asked. I felt quite sure that if Ben didn't know, he would think up some ingenious way for accounting for it.

My companion refilled his pipe and pulled thoughtfully at it for several minutes before making reply. "Nothing polishes up my memory like a full pipe," he said at last.

"I didn't seem to remember just how it was at first, but I guess I have recollected.

You see I am such an old man that I have forgotten a great many things that I used to know, and that was one of them. It was this way:

“Once there was a cock partridge who was not so beautiful as his fellows, and he had a hard time getting a mate. You know girls and women think a pile of fine feathers, and so do the lady birds.

“This cock was strong and smart and all right in every way, only his feathers were rusty, and this made him feel awkward and out of place. You know how a boy feels when company comes and he has got on his old clothes with holes in the knees and elbows.

“Well, this cock didn’t have anything but just his old every-day rusty suit, so he didn’t feel like strutting up and down, and wooing the lady partridges as the other cocks did. And the lady partridges wouldn’t have anything to do with him.

“One day the poor cock was standing on an old log in a deep thicket, wishing that the hawk or the owl would happen along and

carry him off, he was that cut up about it, when in a sudden fit of despair he raised both his wings and beat upon his breast. To his great surprise the thump of his wings against his breast made a loud noise that almost frightened him. But the sound that he had made interested him, so presently he raised his wings and struck again.

“He soon discovered that by swelling out his feathers and by striking very hard and fast with his wings he could make a noise that fairly made the woods ring.

“When the rabbits and the squirrels first heard this racket in the deep woods that had been so quiet and peaceful a moment before, they were greatly frightened and fled away in terror, but finally one rabbit who was braver than the rest came back to investigate.

“The thing that the rabbit saw fairly took its breath away, for there, standing on the middle of the log, was Mr. Rusty Coat, as they called him. He was bristled up to his greatest size, and his wings were beating upon his breast so rapidly that the eye could not

follow them. The cock looked as large as a bushel basket.

“When the rabbit saw what was going on in the thicket, it hurried away and told a female partridge who was scratching for beech-nuts in a neighboring thicket. So the lady partridge went to see.

“She was so delighted with the performance and with the enormous size of the cock when he was drumming that she went right up to him and began making love to him when he had finished, although she had refused him several times before that spring.

“But by this time the cock was getting mighty vain of his accomplishment, so that when the lady partridge asked him to marry her, he said ‘not much.’ He was too busy drumming to think of marriage.

“They say a woman can’t keep a secret. No more can a lady partridge. So when the poor female saw that it was no use trying to get the cock, she told her sister partridges of the wonderful drummer on the old log in the witch-hazel thicket. So other female par-

tridges came to hear the wonderful drummer, and he soon had all the lady partridges in the woods about his drumming log watching and listening.

"No matter how saucy or hateful they had been to him when he was only Mr. Rusty Feathers, all were ready to praise and admire him now.

"Well, it ended just as it always does, Harry. They were so persistent that he finally had to marry one of them to get rid of the rest, so he picked out the most beautiful and the largest of all his admirers, and they were married by the Woodchuck, who was then Justice of the Peace, and I presume they lived happy for ever afterwards.

"You see this partridge's drumming had turned out such a success that all the other partridges soon learned it, and they have kept it up to this very day."

"Is that all, Ben?" I asked, my eyes riveted upon this wonderful magician of the camp fire.

"Surely, Harry," replied my companion,

jumping up briskly, "you don't want all the good things in one night. Besides it is time for our midnight lunch."

Then we would open the basket that my mother had packed for us and such an array of good things would be piled upon the blanket that I speedily forgot to tease for more camp fire stories.

When we had finished bread and butter, with eggs boiled in the hot sap, and eaten pie and doughnuts, we would set rosy Baldwin apples sputtering before the dancing blaze, and chestnuts roasting in the coals. I would shell the popcorn, and soon it would be popping away like a Lilliputian army.

With these good things so tempting to the palate of a country boy we rounded out our midnight meal.

Outside the winds would be howling and shrieking in the treetops, while the great branches thrashed their arms and groaned.

Perhaps in some lull there would come the mellow, mournful call of the great Horned Owl. I knew from Ben's teachings that the

small horned owls were already hatched in the hollow top of some tree in the black ash swamp.

Or maybe the lull between gusts from nature's mighty bellows would be punctuated with the sharp bark of a fox, some night prowler in search of a partridge or a field mouse.

If the night was very cold occasionally the crust upon the snow would snap with a report like the crack of a rifle.

How well I knew all these night sounds, and what they meant, thanks to my kind old Woodsman Friend.

From listening to the outdoor sounds I would fall to studying the queer shapes that came and went in the firelight, or in the great clouds of steam that danced over the sap pan. Hobgoblins and ghosts without end.

I never could make out whether it was the howling of the wind and the snapping of the fire, or the bubbling of the sap, or all three that made me so sleepy.

When Ben had made everything snug for

the night, and had spread down a couple of warm buffalo robes that we kept at camp for the purpose, a cozier bed could hardly be imagined. So to the music of the howling wind, and snapping fire and bubbling sap, we fell asleep before our winter camp fire.







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